

VOL. 107  
ISSN 0032-6178



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A Monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

DECEMBER 2002



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*Monthly Journal of Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

**DECEMBER 2002**

## CONTENTS

Traditional Wisdom .....	581	Jābāla Upaniṣad .....	611
This Month.. .....	582	<i>Swami Atmapriyananda</i>	
<i>Editorial:</i>		Glimpses of Holy Lives .....	613
The Quest for Happiness .....	583	From 'Possession' to 'Passage': A Study of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna .....	615
Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago ...	587	<i>Dr. M Sivaramkrishna</i>	
'You Will Be a Paramahansa!' ...	589	Religion in a Dynamic World .....	618
<i>Swami Sarvagatananda</i>		<i>Dr Tapati Chakravarty</i>	
Education according to Vedanta .....	598	<i>Review Article:</i>	
<i>Swami Pitambarananda</i>		Varanasi at the Crossroads .....	620
<b>Reflections on 11 September</b> .....	603	<i>Dr. Prema Nandakumar</i>	
<i>Swami Gautamananda</i>		Reviews .....	624
Vedanta: Death and the Art of Dying .....	605	Reports .....	628
<i>Pravrajika Brahmaprana</i>			

**Vol 107 Jan.—Dec. 2002 Annual Index**

Visit us at: [www.advaitaonline.com](http://www.advaitaonline.com) for a free internet edition

Editorial Office:

Prabuddha Bharata  
P.O. Mayavati, Via. Lohaghat  
Dt. Champawat 262 524, Uttaranchal

Publication Office:

Advaita Ashrama  
5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014  
Ph: 91+33+2440898/2452383/2164000  
Fax: 2450050 • E-mail: [pb@advaitaonline.com](mailto:pb@advaitaonline.com)

Cover: Swami Vivekananda's Temple at Ramakrishna Math, Belur, near Kolkata.

उत्तिष्ठ  
जाग्रत  
प्राप्य  
वरान्निबोधत ।

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Vol. 107

DECEMBER 2002

No. 12

## Traditional Wisdom

### SPIRITUAL TEACHER

नानाछिद्रघटोदरस्थितमहादीपप्रभाभास्वरं ज्ञानं यस्य तु चक्षुरादिकरणद्वारा बहिः स्पन्दते ।  
जानामीति तमेव भान्तमनुभात्येतत्समस्तं जगत्तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥

He whose knowledge issues forth through the sense organs like the glow of a powerful lamp placed in a pot with many holes and vibrates outside in the shape of the thought 'I know', whose light illumines the entire universe—to that Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the form of my guru I bow in reverence. (*Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotram*, 4)

षडङ्गादि वेदो मुखे शास्त्रविद्या कवित्वादि गद्यं सुपद्यं करोति ।  
मनश्चैत्रं लग्नं गुरोरङ्घ्रिपद्मे ततः किं ततः किं ततः किं ततः किम् ।

The lore of the Vedas and auxiliary scriptures may dwell on your tongue; you may be gifted in writing prose and poetry; but if your mind is not absorbed in the guru's lotus-like feet, what of all that? Yes, what indeed will it all avail? (*Guru-aṣṭakam*, 3)

Faith, intense faith, in the words of your guru will make everything easy for you. Without this all forms and rituals of religion are useless. So surrender yourself absolutely to your guru as a kitten does to its mother. He will then look after you and provide you with everything; yours is only to have simple faith. How far can your intellect can go? He who has taken your burden on himself, has a responsibility and feels anxious for your welfare much more than you do. He will save you from dangers and difficulties. No evil can befall a faithful disciple who is under the protecting wings of the guru. (Swami Brahmananda)

The Universal Mother who manifests Herself as the exalted divine power, removing all kinds of impurities due to spiritual ignorance of the human mind, is what is called the mood of the spiritual teacher (the *gurubhava* or the *gurushakti*). It is this divine power (*shakti*) which the scriptures speak of as the spiritual teacher, and it is to this power that man is called upon to offer his heart's reverence and adoration with unflinching faith. (Swami Saradananda)

---

## ∞ This Month ∞

The *Bhagavadgita* analysis of threefold happiness forms the subject matter of this month's editorial, **The Quest for Happiness**.

**Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago** features excerpts from 'Manhood', an article by Swami Swarupanandaji.

The fourth part of the serial '**You Will Be a Paramahansa!**' by Swami Sarvagatanandaji portrays some more glimpses of Swami Kalyananandaji's personality and reminiscences of Swamis Shuddhanandaji and Premeshanandaji during their visits to Kankhal Sevashrama. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order from Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston.

In the concluding part of his serial article **Education according to Vedanta**, Swami Pitambaranandaji discusses in the light of Vedanta evaluation in education, preparations for education, continuing education and teacher education. The author is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

The American Consulate General in Chennai organized a meeting at the American Centre auditorium in the city on 11 September 2002 to mark the first anniversary of 11 September events last year. Dr Richard D Haynes, Consul General of the United States of America, made the opening remarks. Among the eminent participants on the occasion was Swami Gautamanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. **Reflections on 11 September** is the text of his speech at the meeting. He is also a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission.

In her thought-provoking article

**Vedanta: Death and the Art of Dying**, Pravrajika Brahma-prana discusses the divine core of human personality, the threefold body that covers it, and the theory of karma and transmigration. A Vedantic view of life, meditation on our real nature and expansion of consciousness—in short, living a spiritual life—she argues, can help us overcome the fear of death and face it boldly. The author is a nun of the Ramakrishna Order from the Santa Barbara convent, a unit of Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood.

**Jābāla Upaniṣad** is the fourth instalment of the translation of this important Sannyasa Upanishad by Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur. The elaborate notes are based on Upanishad Brahmayogin's commentary.

**Glimpses of Holy Lives** features this month the unique life of inspiring devotion of Kannappa Nayanar, one of the sixty-three Shaiva saints of Tamil Nadu.

In his learned article **From 'Possession' to 'Passage': A Study of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna**, Dr M Sivaramkrishna analyses the *Gospel* from a new perspective. The author is a former Professor and Head of the department of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad, and has a long and close association with our journal.

Stressing that religion implies unification and the same God inspires all religions, Dr Tapati Chakravartty, in her article **Religion in the Dynamic World**, pleads for religious harmony, and tolerance and respect for all religions. The author is from Dhanbad, Jharkhand, and holds a doctorate in philosophy.



---

# The Quest for Happiness

## EDITORIAL

**H**uman life is a constant struggle for happiness—one's own and that of one's own; happiness here and happiness in the afterlife. Everyone looks forward to a life of unmixed happiness. But misery is happiness' twin brother. We seek one; the other comes uninvited. Sometimes life becomes so miserable—due to outside causes and perhaps more due to our own thoughts and actions—that it is natural for us to look forward to happiness free from misery at least in the afterlife.

There was a widow who was eager to know how her departed husband was doing. She consulted a medium who put her in communication with her husband. 'Peter,' she asked, 'are you happy now?' Peter answered, 'I am very happy!' Continuing, she asked, 'Are you happier than you were on earth with me?' Peter promptly replied, 'Yes, I am far happier than I was on earth with you.' Then the widow inquired, 'Tell me, Peter, what is it like in heaven?' 'Heaven!' cried Peter, 'I'm not in heaven.' He was in hell and found life there happier than life with her on earth. That might be carrying things a bit too far, but some people do bring misery on themselves and others.

### Pairs of Opposites

Life in the world is characterized by pairs of opposites: happiness-misery, profit-loss, praise-criticism, heat-cold, and so on. Swami Vivekananda put it beautifully when he said, 'Happiness presents itself before man, wearing the crown of sorrow on its head. He who welcomes it must also welcome sorrow.'<sup>1</sup> It is a package deal. If we seek happiness we should be ready to face misery too. The solution lies in not seeking happiness. But, apparently, happiness is the one goal of all human

endeavours. Where is the catch? A clear idea about what happiness is and where to seek it can set things in perspective.

### Three Kinds of Happiness

In the eighteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* Sri Krishna classifies happiness into three types: *sāttvic* (superior), *rājasic* (mediocre) and *tāmasic* (inferior). The description is about two things: the nature of happiness in the beginning and in the end, and the source of that happiness. Though the *Gita* description begins with the superior kind, for our convenience we begin with the inferior.

### Inferior (*Tāmasic*) Happiness

'That happiness which begins and ends in self-delusion and which arises from sleep, laziness and carelessness or heedlessness is called *tāmasic* happiness.'<sup>2</sup> Obviously, by sleep is meant that which is in excess of normal human requirement. Laziness and carelessness imply irresponsibility towards oneself, towards others and towards one's responsibilities. Systematically going about one's activities needs discipline. It can mean physical and mental pain to those not having even a nodding acquaintance with discipline. The result is half-hearted and slipshod work. Sri Krishna cautions against this attitude: 'Those who give up work for fear of physical suffering, out of a feeling that it is painful, do not obtain the result of true relinquishment.'<sup>3</sup> (18.4) It goes without saying that the sooner one gets rid of the inclination for *tāmasic* happiness, the better for one's evolution.

### Mediocre (*Rājasic*) Happiness

'That happiness which is like nectar at first but is like poison in the end and which

arises from the contact of sense organs with sense objects, is called *rājasīc* happiness.’ (18.38) Since life in the world centres round this kind of happiness, we need to examine in detail the effect of this happiness on human personality.

### The Process of Perception

Before elaborating on the nectar- and poison-like natures of mediocre happiness, a brief discussion on our perception mechanism will be in order. The five sense organs—ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose—have their corresponding objects in the world, both physical and mental. The mind, the king of all organs (10.22), is behind these organs and hooks itself to any of these two-linked chains: ear-sound, skin-touch, eyes-sight (form), tongue-taste or nose-smell. The ‘I’, who is behind the mind, gets connected to the mind and thus results perception: ‘I hear, I touch, I see’, and so on. The I-mind-organ-object connection is so swift and subtle that we hardly get to know the links in the chain.

### The Effect of Sense Enjoyments

The mind and the organs are so constituted that they always tend to come in contact with the sense objects.<sup>3</sup> The happiness arising from this organ-object chain is like nectar in the beginning, considering the natural outgoing propensity of the senses. But a life of unbridled sense enjoyment does not really lead us anywhere. If it leads anywhere at all, it is to our own ruin. King Yayāti’s life from the *Bhāgavata* illustrates that sense enjoyment does not quench one’s desire for the objects. Cursed to premature old age by an incensed sage, the king borrowed his son’s youth and enjoyed sense pleasures for thousands of years. At the end of it all he spoke words of wisdom: ‘Never can desire be quenched by enjoying sense objects. Like fire fed with ghee it only flames up all the more.’<sup>4</sup>

In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, when lured by Yama with a long life on earth and rare-to-get

sense pleasures, the boy Naciketas was not moved from his resolve to get an answer to his important question on death. He said, ‘O Death! These pleasures endure only till tomorrow. They exhaust the vigour of the senses. ... Keep your horses, dances and songs to yourself.’<sup>5</sup>

The point to be noted here is the exhaustion of the vigour of the senses. At one point man understands that it was not he who enjoyed the sense objects, but it was the sense objects that enjoyed him.<sup>6</sup> How this mediocre happiness is like poison in the end will be clear when this fact strikes one forcefully.

How the desire for sense objects acts as poison in the end is evident from the chain of degradation graphically described in the *Gīta*.

Thinking about sense objects gives rise to attachment to them. Attachment results in desire (to possess the object). Desire leads to anger (with the obstacles on the way to enjoyment). When a person becomes angry, he becomes confused and deluded. And delusion makes him lose memory (of not only his real Self, but also of his responsibilities and code of conduct). Loss of memory is followed by loss of discrimination, which results in (spiritual) death.<sup>7</sup>

### Need for Self-control

There is a purpose in life greater than being taken for a ride by the unruly senses and the mind. The ancient Hindu life was divided into four phases: *brahmacharya* (student life, a life of serious studies and self-control); *gārhasthya* (life of the householder, a life which permits giving vent to one’s legitimate desires, the self-control learnt in the earlier phase regulating and disciplining one’s mind); *vānaprastha* (literally, retirement into the forest along with the wife and both practising spiritual disciplines. In the modern context this could mean withdrawing oneself from family cares and responsibilities once the children settle down in life, and spending more time calling on God); *sannyāsa* (renouncing all ties, becoming a monk and making God-realization one’s whole-time pursuit). The self-con-

trol practised in the first phase of life remains as the sheet anchor of the remaining three phases.

Parenthetically, it may be said that this fourfold classification of life need not apply to everyone. The Upanishads permit those endowed with renunciation to take to the fourth stage of life right from the first or second stages too.<sup>8</sup> In modern times only the second and fourth stages is prevalent, with a near extinction of the most important phase of studies coupled with self-control, living with a teacher of exemplary life.

### Higher Kinds of Happiness

Before taking up *sāttvic* or superior happiness, we must mention other kinds of happiness that range between the *rājasīc* and the *sāttvic*. The pursuit of art and science, and the pursuit of moral values bring happiness that transcends the organic level. Superior to that is the happiness resulting from self-control, the happiness in keeping one's body-mind vehicle in good condition and steering it safely to the destination (the goal of life). There is, again, happiness arising from worship of God, repeating His name, meditating on Him and singing His glories.

It is the pursuit of these higher kinds of happiness that differentiates a human being from subhuman beings and lends meaning to human life. Real religion begins with the pursuit of sense-transcendent happiness. But man realizes this only after having had his own share of experiences and lessons in life. Till then the grind in the world continues. In the words of Swami Vivekananda,

The bullock in the oil-mill never reaches the wisp of hay tied in front of him, he only grinds out the oil. So we chase the will-o'-the-wisp of happiness that always eludes us, and we only grind nature's mill, then die, merely to begin again. If we could get rid of evil, we should never catch a glimpse of anything higher; we would be satisfied and never struggle to get free. When man finds that all search for happiness in matter is nonsense, then religion begins.

All human knowledge is but a part of religion.<sup>9</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna explains it with a simple example: 'The grain dealer stores rice in huge bags in his warehouse. Near them he puts some puffed rice in a tray. This is to keep the rats away. The puffed rice tastes sweet to the rats and they nibble at it all night; they do not seek the rice itself. But think! One seer of rice yields fourteen seers of puffed rice. How infinitely superior is the joy of God to the pleasure of "woman and Gold"!'<sup>10</sup>

### Superior (*Sāttvic*) Happiness

And now the superior or *sāttvic* happiness described in the *Gīta*: 'That in which a man comes to rejoice by practice and in which he reaches the end of pain; that which is like poison at first but is like nectar in the end—that happiness, born of the serenity arising from a clear knowledge of the Atman, is called *sāttvic* happiness.'<sup>11</sup>

Being the source of all knowledge and bliss, the knowledge of the Atman alone can give us the ultimate happiness. According to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 'That which is infinite alone is happiness. There is no happiness in anything finite. The Infinite alone is happiness. One must desire to understand the Infinite alone.'<sup>12</sup>

How *sāttvic* happiness is like poison at first needs a little explanation. The first step to the attainment of this happiness is disciplining the mind and the sensory system. To be steadfast in this endeavour is comparable to swallowing a bitter medicine. That the mind and the senses have their own agenda becomes clear when we begin to be right earnest in disciplining them. Trying to concentrate on an idea, on a book in hand, trying to meditate on a name or form of God, trying to turn our resolutions into actions—when we try any of these, the rebellion from within will convince us that discipline is not something the mind and the senses are happy with. Sticking to a course of discipline warrants heroic efforts.

Not surprisingly, many drop out from the struggle overwhelmed by the inner resistance. This initial struggle with a rebelling mind, with no immediate returns, is very much like swallowing poison.

### Attainment of Superior Happiness

Swami Vivekananda's four yogas—the paths of selfless action, devotion, meditation and discrimination—are four paths to the attainment of this superior happiness emanating from our real Self. Disciplining the mind and the senses is a feature common to all the paths. Swamiji held a strong faith in one's higher Self to be fundamental to greatness in any endeavour. It is all the more true in this quest for happiness. Here are Swamiji's inspiring words to goad us onward:

In this embodied existence, you will be tossed again and again on the waves of happiness and misery, prosperity and adversity—but know them all to be of momentary duration. Never care for them. 'I am birthless, the deathless Atman, whose nature is Intelligence'—implanting this idea firmly in your heart, you should pass the days of your life. 'I have no birth, no death, I am the Atman untouched by anything'—lose yourself completely in this idea. If you can once become one with this idea, then in the hour of sorrow and tribulation, it will rise of itself in your mind, and you will not have to strive with difficulty to bring it up.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

To summarize. There are three levels of happiness according to the *Gita* correspond-

ing to *sattva* (superior), *rajas* (mediocre) and *tamas* (inferior). Disciplining the mind and the sensory system—in short, spiritual disciplines—alone can help us tap higher levels for happiness. \*

### References

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.419.
2. *Bhagavadgita*, 18.39.
3. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2.1.1.
4. *Bhāgavata*, 9.19.14.
5. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1.26.
6. *Bhogā na bhuktā vāyameva bhuktāḥ*. —Bharṭṛhari, *Vairāgya Śatakam*, 7.
7. *Gita*, 2.62-3.
8. *Brahmacaryam samāpya gr̥hi bhavet. Gr̥hi bhūtvā vani bhavet. Vani bhūtvā pravrajat. Yadi vā itarathā brahmacaryādeva pravrajat gr̥hād vā vanādvā*. ... *Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajat*. —*Jāblāla Upaniṣad*, 4.1.
9. *CW*, 7.102-3.
10. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 385.
11. *Gita*, 18.36-7.
12. *Yo vai bhūmā tatsukham, nālpe sukhamasti, bhūmaiva sukham, bhūmā toeva vijñāsitavyaḥ iti*. —*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.23.1.
13. *CW*, 7.136-7.

## Cessation of Misery

The miseries of the world cannot be cured by physical help only. Until man's nature changes, these physical needs will always arise, and miseries will always be felt, and no amount of physical help will cure them completely. The only solution of this problem is to make mankind pure. Ignorance is the mother of all the evil and all the misery we see. Let men have light, let them be pure and spiritually strong and educated, then alone will misery cease in the world, not before.

—Swami Vivekananda, *CW*, 1.53





# Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago



December 1902

## Manhood

**T**he belief is not only common but strong among the Hindus, echoed, as it is, all through the Puranas, that incarnation in the human body occurs after long rounds of sojourn in less developed forms. In the opening verses of *Vivekachudamani* Shankara too lays re-iterated stress on the fact that the human body is difficult of attainment. Says he in the sixth verse:

'Rare is the attainment of these three—due to the grace of the gods—manhood, desire for Moksha and the society of the spiritually great.'

Though Hinduism, like the less developed forms of religion, cannot hold that the lower beings are without a soul, the belief among Hindus is general that it is almost impossible for any being lower than the human to rise to the higher regions of spiritual thought and feeling. That is within the practicable reach of human beings alone.

It will be interesting now to enquire into the full significance of the word 'manhood'. According to our sacred scriptures difference between a human and a lower being lies in the difference of the manifestation of the omnipresent spiritual Principle—the Self. The human form is blessed with organization which can assimilate and express this inner Light in a much greater measure than a lower form. In short, therefore, the man-ness of man consists in the sharing of a larger influx of the Self, with its necessary consequences—the possession of a wider area of consciousness, a higher and more complex thought-mechanism and a greater and fuller sense life.

'Unto whom much has been given, of him much shall be required' is a universal principle. By use, exercise, or investment, by expressing or giving out are all things gained and increased. He grows not who invests not. Atrophy overtakes disuse. Use, play, expansion is life and growth. Degeneration and death are the rightful heirs of stagnation and disuse.

We have seen that according to the *rishis* manhood consists in a fuller possession of self-hood than the lower beings. *Noblesse oblige*. Rank imposes responsibilities. The basic principle of manhood then is self-respect, a self-respect as much higher and fuller than that possessed by a lower animal as the proportion is between man's light of reason and that of a lower being. A man without his due proportion of self-respect is a myth, a building without a base, a circle without a centre.

Self-respect is the poise between self-negation and self-assertion. While self-control—a healthy check on the lower impulses and propensities—is essential, self-assertion, when the higher nature or fairness demands it, is by no means less requisite in the constitution of a manly self-respect. Indeed, to descend from the general to the particular, a right self-assertion (and therefore self-respect) is what has been most lacking in this unfortunate land for long. Of self-assertion, a mean and cowardly oppression of the weak and downtrodden, there has been enough. India is full of it today, not only as it is expressed in individual lives, but also in her social constitution—in the attitude of the so-called higher castes towards the lower. But for the right kind of self-assertion one might look long, and in vain. Putting up with dishonesty and unfairness, pocketing insults and insolence when they proceed from one either really or (more often than not) only apparently more powerful: the bidding of farewell with all that is noble and manly in man for a wretched pittance—these are the order of the day. And yet we

are not ashamed to cry, and that *ad nauseam*, that we are a spiritual people. Where, if we are spiritual, is that spiritual magnetism, the *brahma tejas*, which used to overpower even mighty *kshatra tejas* as nothing? Where is that wonderful potency a sight of which was enough for even Vishwamitra to forego his kingdom and make superhuman efforts to attain it? Echo answers where.

No, the fact is we are hypnotized by the past and like monomaniacs preying upon our own minds and dwelling on a past that is *completely past*. We are so enveloped by *tamas* that we cannot even know it and therefore mis-know it. The Lord has well said in the *Gita* (18.32):

‘That which enveloped in darkness regards *adharma* as *dharma* and sees all things as perverted, that intellect, O Partha, is *tamasic*.’

How painfully true is this in the case of modern India! A people sunk into the grossest unspirituality claiming to be spiritual! A people without self-respect can hardly deserve to be called by that name. And as we have said in the beginning of the paper, it is only possible for *human beings* to be spiritual in the true sense of the word. And we have said too that a human being without his due proportion of self-respect is a myth, a monster.

Let us look at facts squarely in the face while there is yet time and hope. As a people we have to re-learn self-respect. We have to learn to be men by training ourselves to put up with inconvenience and perhaps loss if necessary, for the sake of seeing that an unjust social act is not perpetrated, that we are not made a party to a dishonest or unfair transaction, that we are not high-handedly deprived of a right, that the traditions and the beliefs that we hold dear are not trampled by arrogant feet under our eyes.

There was a time when the epithet ‘mild Hindu’ implied the self-controlled Hindu. But we have gone on self-controlling so that it now means the Hindu without self-respect, the Hindu without moral courage! What is milder than a corpse?

No, the truth is we have lost our *tejas*, our moral strength. This is how it happened. The march downward began with our ancestors carefully cultivating distinction and division among themselves. Of course the caste system lent itself beautifully to this process. Thus was hatred sown. Hearts and sympathies were narrowed and the poison that was harboured in the social system to kill the less favoured in it killed the system itself—for the social organism is one whole. National hate and disunion ended in national unmanliness by drying up its springs of moral strength or *tejas*.

Let us, in the name of all that is sacred, open our eyes, before it is too late. It is late enough now. Let us in the farm of Hindu society cultivate love and sympathy and weed out inequality and hatred. Let us with our heart’s blood expiate for the past oppression on the so-called lower classes. Let us throw open all the gates and avenues, all the art museums and treasure chambers, all the privileges and powers in the palace of our Hindu state—social and spiritual, to the brothers who have been left out in the cold and in the dark, so long. And with it, let us cultivate self-respect, let us cultivate *tejas*—the force of character and action which should well up in every Hindu breast with the consciousness that he is an heir to *brahmarshis* and *rajarshis* and above all, let us every morning when we awake from sleep, with folded hands pray to the Paramatman—the Self in us, our own Self, the Source of all truth and power—‘O Thou the Source of *ojas*, give us *ojas*; O Source of *virya*, give us *virya*; O Source of *bala*, give us *bala*.’

✱

—Swami Swarupananda

---

# ‘You Will Be a Paramahansa!’

SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA

## Part 4: Visits of Swamis Shuddhanandaji and Premeshanandaji

**K**alyan Maharaj never spoke about himself and any information about him was hard to come by. For a long time we did not even know his pre-monastic name. It was only much later that I came to know that it was Dakshinaranjan Guha. He hailed from Barisal. Barisal people are known to be extremely strong-willed and inflexible. Some of the finest national leaders like Aswini Kumar Dutta came from that district. Kalyan Maharaj too was a man of very strong will, and quite unbending. He could work indefatigably.

As I said before, he would get up many times every night and visit the hospital. He did not make others do it. He did that himself, like he did many other things. That is why when he passed away we wondered, ‘Now who is going to manage all this?’ He was the only person who knew and could handle everything at the Sevashrama. And he never went out; he was always available.

### Kalyan’s Maharaj’s Reaction to Akhandanandaji’s Passing

I heard that Akhandanandaji Maharaj never went to Kankhal. But, indeed, he corresponded with Kalyan Maharaj. After Kalyan Maharaj’s demise I discovered from his belongings a telegram informing him of Swami Akhandanandaji’s passing. On the back of the telegram were Kalyan Maharaj’s remarks: ‘The light of the Mission has passed away. From now on, instead of love, law will prevail.’ That is, from then on we would be governed by rules rather than by love. Indeed,

that was the time when Math rules and code of conduct for monks were framed.

### His Strong Will and Dexterity in Action

Kalyan Maharaj instructed the workers in only a few words. He was always active and doing something or other, be it in the hospital or in the garden or in the dairy. He was ever busy but did not talk much. I was really interested to know how he could manage everything without ever raising his voice. He was so calm and poised that when he was around, others too went about their jobs quietly.

***I used to talk with Kalyan Maharaj very freely. He used to call me tui and I too would say tui to him, not knowing what the word meant, because nobody but he talked with me in Bengali.***

People used to think Kalyan Maharaj was miserly because he would sew bed sheets and pillowcases for the patients with his own hands when he could have purchased them. He used to stitch the sheets by placing together two lengths of a long piece of cloth, and sewing them in such a way that they did not overlap each other. It was a nice method. I tried it once, but the seams were uneven and the sheets all wrinkled up! I asked him about it. He said, ‘Narayan, when you sew the sheets, you should not stretch them too much. Just hold them together and stitch slowly. If you stretch one sheet and the other is loose, then this is what happens.’ Such fine work! He knew the art. And he had the patience—that

was the thing.

Kalyan Maharaj adhered to his principles very strictly. When he took up anything you could not easily deflect him. One day in the middle of an argument I jokingly asked him, 'Are you from Barisal, by any chance?' 'Who told you I am from Barisal?' 'I think so,' I said. He did not reply. Afterwards I came to know that he was indeed from Barisal! He never forgot my asking him that question. You see, we had a kind of closeness that I could also argue with him. He never took it badly; he loved it.

### The Tui-tui Episode

I used to talk with Kalyan Maharaj very freely. He used to call me *tui* and I too would say *tui* to him, not knowing what the word meant, because nobody but he talked with me in Bengali. This went on for quite some time. Then one day Swami Jnanatmanandaji, who had come from Belur Math, said to me, 'Hey, Narayan, you must not say *tui* to Maharaj. *Tui* is used only for juniors and servants!' 'Oh, I did not know that!' I replied. 'He calls me that. In English there is only one word for *you*.' 'No, no, no! In Bengali there are three—*apni*, *tumi*, *tui*. You are a little fellow and it is all right if he calls you *tui*, but you cannot call him *tui*, you must address him as *apni*.' 'Should I? But he never told me so,' I said. 'He will not tell you, but you must do it,' Jnanatmanandaji instructed. 'Also, don't enter his room. He does not like anybody to get into his room. Stand outside and talk.' Well, I had my lesson. That afternoon when I went to Maharaj's room, I stood outside and said, '*Maharaj, apni kemon achhen?*' (Sir, how are you?) 'So who is your new teacher now?' he replied. 'You fooled me all these days without telling me what *tui* meant. I should never have called you *tui*. They say it is a very bad word. It ought to be *apni*. Now I know the secret of your language. And they also told me that I should not enter your room without your permission.' 'Forget all that,' Kalyan Maharaj said. 'Come in right away. Akhandanandaji Maharaj sent you to

*me*, understand? You follow what I tell you, not what others say. Be yourself. Come inside and just be what you were. They are brain-washing you.' 'But you must not fool me like that. I should not have addressed you as *tui*,' I replied. 'You come inside here first,' he said. I went in and begged pardon for having called him *tui* all those days. He laughed and said, 'It doesn't matter. Words are not important. It is what you feel inside that matters.' 'But no! Words should match feelings, too,' I told him. Later Kalyan Maharaj said to Jnanatmanandaji, 'Well, you are spoiling him. I used to enjoy the way he spoke with me; I liked very much his calling me *tui*.'

### His Special Love for Me

So Kalyan Maharaj was really very intimate with me. I don't know why. His relationship with others was quite formal and he hardly talked with them—he just told them what to do, and that was all. One day a swami said to him, 'Nobody can come and talk with you but that boy!' Kalyan Maharaj replied, 'You know, in all the thirty-six years that I have been here, no President of the Order has ever sent me a person saying, "Take good care of him." So it is different with this boy. Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj himself has sent him to me!' Kalyan Maharaj was really very particular that nobody mistreated me. I was no good from the point of view of hospital work; I just went with him, that's all. Yet he taught me many things. Really, in those two and a half years with him I learned many, many things about hospital work.

Moreover, Kalyan Maharaj had tremendous faith in me. His trust in me was so great that he once said, 'After Nischayananda, I have not found anybody to whom I can entrust my work here, except this boy.' Not that the others did not cooperate. Take it from me, we were all a nice group of young brahmacharins. A very good team we had, I tell you. And Kalyan Maharaj too was quite lenient with everybody; he liked us all. He would say, 'Here-

after, you manage. Think out things for yourselves.’ Whenever we informed him about something that we planned to do, he just said, ‘Go ahead. Do it.’ And everything went on well.

Because Akhandanandaji Maharaj had asked him to take care of me, in the beginning Kalyan Maharaj did not let me work. He tried to make me as comfortable as possible and kept an eye on what I got to eat, what I was doing. So the others would say, ‘Oh, Maharaj is spoiling that boy. He doesn’t do anything; he just goes about with Maharaj and always argues with him.’ It was a fact. Kalyan Maharaj used to take me wherever he went: if he went shopping, I had to be with him; if he went to the neighbouring monasteries on invitation, again, I had to go with him. Wherever he went, I had to accompany him. Naturally, in the beginning everybody was jealous of me. ‘Who is this boy? Where did Maharaj get him from, anyway? He doesn’t know Hindi, can’t speak Bengali, and so Maharaj talks with him in English!’ Of course I knew what was going on and felt I should not take advantage of the situation. So gradually I tried to move closely with the others, helping them as much as I could. When Kalyan Maharaj went to rest, I used to go to the hospital and scrub the floors and clean pots and pans. Slowly I captured their hearts. Otherwise, even some senior swamis wondered what my intentions were. They felt like that for a few weeks.

### Keeping One’s Promise

Once I was to go to Belur Math and Sar-gachhi for a visit. Kalyan Maharaj asked me to return by a certain date because he wanted to go somewhere on that day. When I came back right on time, as he had requested, he was very happy. ‘So prompt!’ he exclaimed. ‘You asked me to come on this day and here I am,’ I said.

So he was able to leave on schedule. If you promised a thing, if you did a thing as he wanted, it would please him immensely. That is what made him trust me implicitly. Never betray anybody’s trust. When they trust you, live up to it. Kalyan Maharaj used to say that keeping one’s promise was a most important thing, especially for a monk.

### Swami Shuddhanandaji’s Visit

Then came Swami Shuddhanandaji Maharaj, who gave a big lift to the entire Sevashrama. He was also a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, and Kalyan Maharaj and he were good friends. His coming changed the whole atmosphere; the moment he came everything was different. On the day Shuddhanandaji arrived, there was quite a commotion at the Sevashrama. Everyone was very excited. The swami had just retired as General Secretary of the Order and was now on vacation. A room was fixed for him facing mine, next to Kalyan Maharaj’s room. We were all

***If you promised a thing, if you did a thing as he wanted, it would please him immensely. That is what made him trust me implicitly. Never betray anybody’s trust. When they trust you, live up to it. Kalyan Maharaj used to say that keeping one’s promise was a most important thing, especially for a monk.***

waiting to see him. Dr Bannerjee came in his car and Kalyan Maharaj went with him to bring Shuddhanandaji, who was accompanied by Swami Ambikanandaji, Swami Brahmanandaji’s disciple, and Swami Asimanandaji, Holy Mother’s disciple. A brahmacharin attendant accompanied them.

Swami Shuddhanandaji was a real angel. We were so happy to have him with us because he was a good conversationalist and



great scholar in Sanskrit, Bengali and English. We knew he had translated many of Swami Vivekananda's works from Bengali to English and from English to Bengali. While he was in Kankhal, Shuddhanandaji conducted classes on the *Brahma Sutras* for the senior monks. Monks belonging to some nearby monasteries, too, attended the classes.

Our Sevashrama was full of life. Every evening we used to get together, and Shuddhanandaji would talk to us and tell us many things. When he came to know that I did not understand Bengali, he switched over to English, even though some Bengali brahmacharins did not know much English. Whenever I was present, he seemed to make it a point to speak in English so that I could understand. It was really a heavenly atmosphere while he was at the Sevashrama. His talks were uplifting and we would ask him questions. At that time I knew practically nothing about the Mission or about Sri Ramakrishna's disciples. I had read a little about Sri Ramakrishna and gone through some of Swami Vivekananda's works, but did not know any details about their lives. Shuddhanandaji provided many such details during the course of his talks and readily answered all our questions. He was really a great inspirer. He also guided our studies and specially advised us to read the *Gita* regularly.

### My Study of Bengali

When I first came to the Sevashrama I did not pay much attention to Bengali. Bengali is enough removed from Sanskrit and may confuse the beginner and I was afraid it would affect my Sanskrit. But one day it so happened that Swami Jagadanandaji, who was then staying with us because he was not keeping well, asked me to read out to him an article from the *Prabuddha Bharata*. A sentence in the article, 'As many opinions, so many ways', caused Jagadanandaji to remark that it was not a correct translation. He asked me to fetch the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* and he read,

'*Jato mat, tato path*' (As many faiths, so many paths). Then I understood how a poor translation could distort the whole thing, and I decided to learn Bengali. The *Kathamrita* was my textbook and Asimanandaji my teacher. Later on, when Shuddhanandaji returned to Belur Math, he sent me a Bengali grammar called *Varna Parichay* and some other textbooks. I read them all, but more than anything else, reading the *Kathamrita* helped me a lot because Sri Ramakrishna's language is so sweet and clear. Whatever I did not understand, I would ask somebody to explain. While I was in Kankhal we read the *Kathamrita* every evening for those nine years. We read all five volumes one after another and then started over again from the beginning. That was a great help.

### Swami Ramakrishnanandaji's Birthday Celebration

One day when Shuddhanandaji was with us, he asked me whether I knew on which day Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj's birth anniversary fell. I replied in the negative. He asked me to get the almanac and found the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Ashadha. It occurs somewhere in July-August. He said, 'You must observe his birthday. It is chiefly because of him that the entire Ramakrishna Order is so stable and functioning smoothly. In the Baranagore Math days, when all the other swamis were going about on pilgrimages, he was the only one who stayed there permanently, holding the Math together, taking care of those who were there.' So we observed Swami Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj's birthday. It was a wonderful day. Shuddhanandaji spoke about Ramakrishnanandaji Maharaj, his mentor, whom he had known from his Baranagore Math days. Years before he met his guru Swami Vivekananda, Shuddhanandaji had joined the Baranagore Math and was inspired by Swami Ramakrishnanandaji. To him Swami Ramakrishnanandaji was everything.

## Birthdays of Other Direct Disciples

At that time Shuddhanandaji told me to observe the birthdays of all the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. We tried to ascertain their dates of birth and gathered as much information about them as possible. We were not entirely successful, though. However, with great difficulty we collected material from old magazines and copied them down. Sometimes we saved clippings from extra copies of magazines we got from Calcutta and Madras. There was also some material in the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* published by Advaita Ashrama. We used all this material for our regular classes and special occasions. We made a list of birthdays of the direct disciples. Whenever senior monks came to Kankhal they would be requested to speak on this topic. For example, Swamis Jagadanandaji, Premeshanandaji, Tejasanandaji, Bhuteshanandaji, Jnanatmanandaji and some other senior swamis visited Kankhal during those days and stayed with us. They were a source of inspiration to us.<sup>1</sup>

## Shuddhanandaji and Kalyan Maharaj

One day Shuddhanandaji told Kalyan Maharaj that he had been asked by the authorities to inquire about the finances of our Sevashrama— data regarding investments and such other things. This was probably because headquarters never received any detailed report from Kalyan Maharaj. I was standing nearby. Shuddhanandaji said, ‘Hey Kalyan, they wanted me to find out your financial position. What are your investments?’ Kalyan Maharaj answered, ‘Well, Maharaj, why do you worry about all these things? Your health is not good. You are here for some rest and are leading a retired life. They just want to use you while you are here. So forget the whole thing. You must

first recover your health. Take good rest and after a few days we will go to Mussoorie and have a nice time. Stop worrying about these things.’ ‘You are right, Kalyan,’ said Shuddhanandaji. ‘They are trying to put me to some use in my present condition. That is all right.’ And he simply forgot the whole thing. They were loving brothers, you see.

The mutual understanding among Swamiji’s monastic disciples was something great. Once I had the opportunity of seeing together Shuddhanandaji, Virajanandaji and Jnan Maharaj (who remained a *naishthika brahmacharin*). When those three were together, it was indeed a scene to enjoy: they knew each other perfectly and had great feeling and concern for one another—three bodies but one mind, as it were.

***So one day he went to [Holy] Mother, bowed down to her and said, ‘Mother, I will not come here again. I am a misfit here. I am not worthy of this place.’ So saying, he tried to run away. But Mother ran after him and caught him by his shirt! She turned him around, put her hands on his shoulders and, shaking him, said, ‘Whenever bad thoughts disturb your mind, think of me!’***

## My Fish Orthodoxy Fished Out!

Kalyan Maharaj could not bear the summer heat in Hardwar. He used to spend some time in Mussoorie, where we had rented a house for him. Moreover, he had diabetes, and the Sevashrama diet did not agree with him. Since meat was prohibited at the Sevashrama, the doctor asked him to take fish as long as he was in Mussoorie; nothing else would sustain him, because he was a diabetic. So while in Mussoorie, Kalyan Maharaj had to live only on a little fish. But unfortunately, having been raised as a strict vegetarian in Andhra

Pradesh, I had on many occasions severely criticized fish-eating. I used to tell people that in those parts only people of the lowest caste ate fish; decent people shunned it. As children we were not even allowed to walk through the fish market; even passing by it on a bicycle was frowned upon! So I grew up a fish-hater and disliked anybody who ate fish. One day when I was with Kalyan Maharaj in Mussoorie, the doctor came to examine Maharaj. 'You are deteriorating, Maharaj,' he observed. 'You do not appear to be doing well. You have grown so thin!' 'But I am quite all right,' answered Maharaj. Later the doctor took up the matter with Maharaj's brahmacharin attendant, who said, 'Maharaj says we cannot have fish or meat as long as Narayan Maharaj is with us. That's why.' It seems the doctor said, 'Well, if that is the case, Maharaj may not live long.' I knew the doctor pretty well. He used to come and help us at the Sevashrama. He was a Punjabi named Dr Radhakrishnan, and he too was staying in Mussoorie at that time. Before he left I went to him and asked what was the matter. 'I don't know if I should tell you,' he said. 'Go on, tell me.' 'You see, Maharaj was taking fish as I had prescribed. That is the only thing he can and ought to have; otherwise he cannot nourish his body. But I hear he stopped it because you are here now. He wants to avoid doing anything that might offend your orthodox sentiments.' 'Oh, is that so?' I said. 'Will he be all right if he starts eating fish again?' 'Surely,' replied the doctor. 'He should have it daily—and nothing else, no rice or anything of the sort.' 'All right,' I said and thanked him. Here was a man who was ready to die for the sake of a nobody like me! Why should he care so much for me, I wondered. Then I went to the kitchen and called the brahmacharin, 'Come, let us go to the market.' We went to the market and bought some fish. Back home I helped him wash it. Then he cooked it and brought it to the table. As he served it, Kalyan Maharaj said, 'I told you not to bring me any more fish.' 'But Narayan

Maharaj himself took me to the market and asked me to buy it. He says he is going to eat it, too.' 'Will you eat fish?' Maharaj asked me. I said yes. Then it was served, and, though I didn't like it, slowly started eating. Maharaj also took it and everybody enjoyed the dish. 'It is good for you to take fish,' Maharaj told me. That is how it ended, my fish orthodoxy!

I am glad I overcame the prejudice. Having been raised in an orthodox way in southern India, it was deep-rooted in my mind. Many orthodox people never change. Later on I thought: 'If we don't like something that is offered to Sri Ramakrishna, it is a bit funny. We offer something to him yet we don't like it—as though we are superior, holier than Thou! Whatever is offered to Sri Ramakrishna, we should partake of as prasad. What do we know, after all? We know nothing of what is right and what is wrong. If he accepts it, we should accept it as well. That is all there is to it. You see, the point is, in spiritual life we encounter so many unconscious, cultural bondages. We have to break them all. It is very difficult to understand real spirituality, devotion particularly. But one must be very, very careful. It all depends on the individual; we must not force things on others. However, this is how I reasoned it out: If I offer something to Sri Ramakrishna and at the same time hate it, what is the point of such devotion? So the above experience did me a great service. And it also helped me a lot later on when I was in Belur Math. Once when I was there, I fell ill with malaria. One day Vireswaranandaji brought me a cup of fish soup. 'Narayan, they say you like fish. Here, have some fish soup.' 'Well, if *you* give it, I shall certainly take it,' I said.

There are many subtle things like this in spiritual life. If we say we are devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, we have to accept him one hundred per cent. Otherwise we only limit ourselves. Sri Ramakrishna himself once said to Yogin Maharaj, 'You should always do as I ask you to do. Otherwise, in more serious matters

also you will follow your own judgement and come to grief.’ Complete obedience to him is imperative so that our psyche may not resist his teachings—even an apparently insignificant teaching! It is extremely important for a devotee to accept him in toto, unconditionally. We must humbly and wholeheartedly acknowledge that we don’t know anything and that he knows better than us. We are all victims of tradition and prejudice. We have to get rid of them. That is why I am glad I was there in Kankhal in such a spiritual atmosphere, having the good fortune of living with a great soul like Kalyan Maharaj.

#### **Holy Mother’s advice to Swami Tarakeshwaranandaji**

Once Swami Tarakeshwaranandaji, who was very sick, came from Swargashram. Kalyan Maharaj was very particular that the swami was well taken care of. ‘Pay special attention to him,’ he instructed me. ‘He is a very good sadhu. Serve him well.’ Tarakeshwaranandaji was Holy Mother’s disciple. I too found him to be a wonderful monk, a great soul, and served him with special care. He was ever calm, quiet and serene, always contemplative and very pleasing. I derived much inspiration and guidance from him—how to go about everything without getting upset, to mention in particular. One day I asked him how he became a monk. He said that while he was still a student, he used to visit Udbodhan quite often to have Mother’s darshan and receive her blessings. But in college he had to keep company with all sorts of boys and gradually came to feel that he was no good. So one day he went to Mother, bowed down to her and said, ‘Mother, I will not come here again. I am a misfit here. I am not worthy of this place.’ So saying, he tried to run away. But Mother ran after him and caught him by his shirt! She turned him around, put her hands on his shoulders and, shaking him, said, ‘Whenever

bad thoughts disturb your mind, think of me!’ Then she let go of him. On his way back home the young man kept repeating, ‘*Amake mone koro, amake mone koro; mone rakhbe, mone rakhbe*’ (Think of me, remember me). As he lay down on his bed he ruminated on the day’s events. He could not forget Mother’s wonderfully compassionate eyes. After some time he

***‘You want response?’ ‘Of course.’ ‘Then pray to Mother,’ he advised. ‘Thakur discriminates whether the thing you pray for is good for you or not. But Mother is just like your own mother; she will give you whatever you ask for. If you pray to Mother, she will certainly respond. There is nobody like Mother.’***

joined Belur Math to become a monk.

#### **Tarakeshwaranandaji’s forbearance**

Tarakeshwaranandaji was a really great monk. Once when he was walking in the woods near Swargashram, he was accidentally shot by a hunter, who mistook him for a deer. Tarakeshwaranandaji knew the man well. But when the police came and asked him if he knew who had shot him, he said: ‘Yes, I know, but I will not tell you.’ He refused to divulge the name even after being repeatedly requested by the police. The bullet was still lodged in his chest when he came to the Sevashrama. Now and then it used to give him severe headaches and cause terrible pain. He endured everything but never revealed who shot him.

#### **Kalyan Maharaj’s Devotion to Holy Mother**

I believe Swami Kalyananandaji was really Holy Mother’s disciple. He had sannayasa from Swamiji, no doubt, but he was blessed by

Mother—that I know very well. He would frequently say, ‘Mother’s grace, Mother’s grace!’ Before Swamiji returned from the West, Kalyan Maharaj used to visit Mother often. He was especially devoted to her.

I had noticed many times Kalyan Maharaj saluting what looked no more than a piece of cardboard that was hung on a wall in his room. One day I asked him, ‘Maharaj, what is so special about that small piece of cardboard? There is nothing on it.’ ‘Nothing! Can’t you see? That is Holy Mother’s picture that I brought from Belur Math when I came here in 1901. I can still see the impression though you can’t,’ he said. It had almost completely faded; only a faint outline remained. I could not tell what it was, but he could. ‘Mother is there,’ he said, ‘Mother is there in that picture.’

Once I told Kalyan Maharaj that sometimes my prayers—not for material things, but for others’ sake—seemed to go unanswered. ‘I don’t get much response,’ I complained. ‘You want response?’ ‘Of course.’ ‘Then pray to Mother,’ he advised. ‘Thakur discriminates whether the thing you pray for is good for you or not. But Mother is just like your own mother; she will give you whatever you ask for. If you pray to Mother, she will certainly respond. There is nobody like Mother.’ Really, it was wonderful, the way he said it. I put it to the test: I did not pray for myself or for any material thing—and it worked! I was overjoyed to find that Kalyan Maharaj’s words came true.

### Swami Premeshanandaji’s Classes

Swami Premeshanandaji, too, was Holy Mother’s disciple, and Mahapurush Maharaj had blessed him with sannyasa. He was a born poet and composed many beautiful songs. In 1935 Kalyan Maharaj asked me to visit the swami at Swargashram in Rishikesh, where he was staying. I went with two other brahmacharins and requested him to come and stay with us at the Sevashrama; he could teach us, give classes. He refused at first, but when we

begged him, he saw our earnestness and said that he would come on one condition: we had to memorize two verses daily, one from the *Gita* and one from the Upanishads. We promised and he came. With all our regular work in the hospital, we still managed to memorize the verses. Premeshanandaji was a great help to me. He would conduct the class in Bengali and then explain it to me in English. So long as he was there we fully enjoyed his spiritual company.

### Hymn to the Direct Disciples

Later on, when Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj passed away, he was appointed head of the Sargachhi centre. We were all glad for him, even though it meant losing his company. He was going to the right place: he was a great monk, he loved people, and he had many outstanding qualities that needed to be imitated as well as appreciated. Premeshanandaji was greatly loved and respected by one and all at our Sevashrama. He was indeed a wonderful man. He even stayed in my own room for some time. Every morning he would sing on waking up. I always liked that song on Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, *Sri Rama-krishna Parshada Vandanam*. It was not complete at the time, though. All the disciples were not included because some were still alive. It was completed much later. After I came over to America I wrote him a letter requesting him to finish the song. I was thrilled when I got the final version sometime later. We all learned it in Boston and Providence. It is a great contribution—all the disciples in one song!

### Having Nothing to Hide— A Great Spiritual Quality

Once Premeshanandaji was giving us a class on the *Isha Upanishad*. Verse six contains the phrase ‘*tato na vijugupsate*.’<sup>2</sup> He who sees the Atman in all will not have *jugupsa*. The word *jugupsa* may mean either jealousy or abhorrence, but Premeshanandaji explained it in



a novel way. '*Jugupsa*,' he said in Bengali, 'means *gopaner iccha*, the need to keep something secret. But when you see the Atman equally existing in all, you don't hide from yourself and you don't hide from anybody else.' That is the greatest virtue: having no secrets, nothing to hide. It gives you an attitude of non-separateness.

Once Nehru wrote a letter to his daughter on her birthday. He was in jail at the time. Being very rich, he used to shower many gifts on his daughter. But that day, being in jail, he could not send her any gift. So he wrote her a nice letter to this effect: 'My dear child, today I am in jail and cannot send you any gift, but one noble thought comes to my mind and I want to share it with you: Don't do anything in your life which you may need to hide from others.' I was so thrilled when I read that letter. What a nice thing to share! 'Don't do anything which you may need to hide.' If we keep this idea in mind, it is sure to quickly purify us. Nehru was a great, noble soul. Many people think he was an ordinary, secular man bereft

***'But when you see the Atman equally existing in all, you don't hide from yourself and you don't hide from anybody else.' That is the greatest virtue: having no secrets, nothing to hide. It gives you an attitude of non-separateness.***

of religious beliefs.

So, not having any secrets is a great spiritual quality. Premeshanandaji said, '*Gopaner iccha thakena*, one does not feel like keeping secrets from others.'

(to be continued)

## Notes and References

1. Once when Swami Pavitranandaji, then head of Advaita Ashrama, visited Kankhal we asked him if he planned to bring out a book on Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples. 'It will come out in time,' he said. Later on some articles on the subject, written by different people, began to appear in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. These were brought together under the title *The Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*, which was published in 1943. I was briefly in Belur Math then. One day I found Pavitranandaji carrying copies of the new book and was happy to be presented with a copy.
2. '*Yastu sarvani bhutani-atmani-ewanupashyati; Sarvabhuteshu cha-atmanam tato na vijugupsate*. And he who perceives all beings in his own Self and his own Self in all beings, he does not, by virtue of that perception, hate anyone.' —*Isha Upanishad*, 6.

## Visitors

When Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States, he saw dozens of people every day. Most had complaints of one kind or another. One day a visiting Governor told the President that he did not understand how he was able to meet so many people in the space of a few hours.

'Why, you're finished with all your visitors by dinner time,' said the Governor, 'while I'm often in my office till midnight.'

'Yes,' said Coolidge. 'That's because you talk.'

---

# Education according to Vedanta

SWAMI PITAMBARANANDA

## Part 3: Evaluation—Levels and Purpose

Let us now consider Vedantic ideas of evaluation in education. Usually evaluation is thought of on three levels: before admission to a particular course, during the process and at the end of the course. Evaluation during the process, again, is related to three aspects: the progress made by the student, the ability of the teacher and the efficacy of the method.

The most important feature of Vedantic evaluation at any stage is its purpose: never to reject a student, but rather to devise methods by which he will understand the subject and pass the course.

### Evaluation at the End

It was evaluation at the end when Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*: ‘O Pārtha (Arjuna), did you hear [these teachings] with an undivided mind? Has your delusion, born of ignorance, been destroyed?’<sup>1</sup> Śrī Śaṅkarācārya comments: ‘In order to ascertain whether or not the disciple has comprehended the meaning of the scripture, the Lord asked this question. It was to have his delusion dispelled that efforts were put in from both the sides: from Arjuna to listen to the scripture, and from the Lord to teach him.’ Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s intention apparently was if Arjuna had not understood His teachings, He would devise some other methodology to make him understand. This illustrates what the teacher is expected to do: make the student understand the subject; devise a different method for him, if necessary.

### Making the Student Realize His Potential

Let us recollect the incident in the *Chāṇ-*

*dogya Upaniṣad* (discussed in the first part of this article):

When Śvetaketu returned home thinking that he had completed his education, his father said to him, ‘O Śvetaketu, my dear, now that you are conceited, proud of being a learned man, and immodest like this, did you ask for that instruction [about the Supreme Brahman] through which the unheard of becomes heard, the unthought of becomes thought of, the unknown becomes known?’ Śvetaketu asked, ‘O revered sir, of what nature is that teaching?’ ‘Dear boy, by knowing a lump of clay all things made of clay become known. All modification is name-based and has speech as its basis. Clay alone is real.’ ... Then Śvetaketu said, ‘Those revered teachers did not know it; for if they had known, why shouldn’t they have told me? You yourself, revered father, tell me that.’ ‘So be it, my dear,’ said he.<sup>2</sup>

### Competence Assessment

Here, again, the purpose is threefold: not to reject but to (1) show the student the way to competence, (2) find methods of education suiting his inherent talents, and more important, (3) make him realize his potential, thereby boosting his confidence and encouraging him to participate in the educational process.

We move on to the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. The boy Naciketas goes to a great teacher, Yama, and asks him: ‘There is this doubt about a man when he is dead: some say that he exists; others, that he does not. This I would like to know, taught by you.’<sup>3</sup>

The teacher wanted to test the pupil and tried to put him off: ‘On this subject even the gods of yore had doubts. The nature of Atman is subtle, not easy to understand. Choose any

other boon, O Naciketas! Do not press me. Release me from that boon.' (1.1.21)

Nachiketas replies: 'O Death, even the gods have their doubts on this subject; and you have declared it to be difficult to understand. But it is difficult to find another teacher like you, and surely no other boon is comparable to this.' (1.1.22)

Yama continues his test by offering Naciketas many rare boons:

Ask for sons and grandsons who will live for a hundred years. Choose elephants, horses, herds of cattle, and gold. Choose a vast domain on earth; live here as many years as you desire. If you consider any other boon equal to that, choose it; choose wealth and a long life. Be the king, O Naciketas, of the wide earth. I will make you the enjoyer of all desires. Whatever desires are difficult to satisfy in this world of mortals, choose them as you wish: these fair maidens, with their chariots and musical instruments—men cannot obtain them. I give them to you and they shall wait upon you. But do not ask me about death. (1.1.23-5)

Although tempted with such hard-to-get allurements, Naciketas remained unperturbed like a deep ocean. He said:

O Death! But these endure only till tomorrow. Moreover, they exhaust the vigour of all the sense organs. Even the longest life is short indeed. Keep your horses, dances and songs for yourself. Wealth can never make a man happy. Moreover, since I have beheld you, I shall certainly obtain wealth; I shall also live as long as you rule. Therefore I won't accept any other boon but the one I have asked. Tell me, O Death, of that great hereafter about which a man has his doubts, and which confers the highest felicity on man. Naciketas will not choose any other boon but the one so wrapped in mystery. (1.1.26-9)

Having tested the disciple's fitness for knowledge, Yama began his teaching:

The good is one thing; the pleasant, another. Serving different needs, both these bind a man. It goes well with him who, of the two, takes the good; but he who chooses the pleasant misses the end. Both the good and the pleasant present

themselves before man. The calm soul examines them well and discriminates. He prefers the good to the pleasant. ... O Naciketas, after pondering the pleasures that are or seem to be delightful, you have renounced them all. You have not taken the road abounding in wealth, where many men sink. Wide apart and leading to different ends are these two: ignorance and what is known as Knowledge. I regard you, O Naciketas, to be one who desires Knowledge; for even many pleasures could not tempt you away. (1.2.1-4)

By saying this, Yama made Naciketas conscious of (1) the mental tendencies underlying this fitness and (2) the great asset which the student possessed.

And then the teacher's praise for the student: 'This knowledge cannot be attained by reasoning. The Atman becomes easy of comprehension, O dearest, when taught by another. You have attained this Knowledge right now. You are, indeed, a man of true resolve. May we always have enquirers like you!' (1.2.9)

And then the full encouragement: 'I consider that the Abode of Brahman is open for Naciketas.' (1.2.13) Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that as a result of such declarations of Yama Naciketas felt, 'I am fit and you, too, sir, are pleased with me' and proceeded (enthusiastically) with his query.

### Competence: Some More Factors

At this stage let us examine a few more factors that constitute 'fitness' according to Vedanta.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says, 'To the pupil who has duly approached him, whose mind is completely serene, and whose senses are controlled, the wise teacher should indeed rightly impart the Knowledge of Brahman, through which one knows the immutable and true Puruṣa.'<sup>4</sup>

In the *Bhagavadgītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna about his teachings: 'You should not speak of this to one who is devoid of austerities or devotion, nor to one who does not render ser-

vice, nor to one who cavils at Me. He who, with supreme devotion to Me, teaches this deeply profound philosophy to My devotees, shall doubtless come to Me alone.<sup>5</sup>

Does 'Me' in these verses refer to God or

the teacher? We get the answer in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*: 'If these truths are taught to a great soul with supreme devotion to God and equal devotion to the teacher, then they will surely shine forth [as inner experiences].'<sup>6</sup>

## Part 4: Three More Aspects of Education

It is not possible to discuss these aspects in detail in a paper devoted to the study of higher or real education according to Vedanta. However we shall explore a few ideas.

### Preparations for Education

It is now clear that education according to Vedanta is chiefly what is called higher education. According to the *Munḍaka Upaniṣad*,

Two kinds of knowledge are to be known—the higher and the lower. Of these two, the lower knowledge is the *R̥g Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, the science of pronunciation, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metre and astrology. And the higher knowledge is that by which the imperishable Brahman is realized. By means of the higher knowledge the wise see Brahman everywhere, which otherwise cannot be seen or seized, which has no root or attributes, no eyes or ears, no hands or feet; which is eternal and omnipresent, all-pervading and extremely subtle; which is imperishable and the source of all beings.<sup>7</sup>

What is described as lower knowledge can be taken to mean preparatory education. But if we apply the principle of absolute correspondence between the goals and the means here, it is clear that self-control and training of the intellect, heart, will and limbs constitute preparatory education, which will endow the student with the required aptitude for higher or real education. We find this beautifully articulated in the invocation at the beginning of the *Kena Upaniṣad*:

'Om. May the different parts of my body, my tongue, *prāṇa*, eyes, ears, and my strength, and also all the other sense organs, be nourished! All, indeed, is Brahman, as is declared in the

Upanishads. May I never deny Brahman! May Brahman never deny me! May there never be denial on the part of Brahman! May there never be denial on my part! May all the virtues described in the Upanishads belong to me who am devoted to Brahman! Yes, may they belong to me! Om Peace! Peace! Peace!

The obvious implication is that a proper development of the personality results in the conviction that 'all is Brahman', which has been revealed in the Upanishads (has been realized by the sages). It is very natural that I can and should also realize It. To facilitate that I need those traits of personality that have been spoken of in the Upanishads and discussed at great length in various contexts. This dynamic conviction is tantamount to aptitude for real knowledge.

In Swami Vivekananda's words, 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'<sup>8</sup> And again, 'the training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.'<sup>9</sup>

According to the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, this preparatory education should be so designed as to make the individual fit to receive the real, higher education: 'We shall expound the science of pronunciation. It deals with sound, pitch, quantity, force, modulation and combination.'<sup>10</sup>

We see later on that while teaching combination, counting numbers, and so on, the Upanishad always tries to present to the student cosmic, noble and widening ideas. For example, 'The earth is the first form, the

heaven is the last form, the sky is the union.' (1.3.1) The teacher is the first form; the student is the last form; knowledge is the union. (1.3.3)

### Continuing Education

If education is the means 'to preserve, modify and transfer its culture to the coming generation', when does such an education start? It should certainly start with the prospective parents themselves; themselves educated, they will be ready to impart it to their would-be child; for the process of education starts before the child's birth and continues till the end of its life.

Let us read two passages from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* instructing prospective parents.

[The disciplines are:] righteousness, truth, austerity, tranquillity, the kindling of the sacrificial fires, [the performance of] the *agnihotra* sacrifice, hospitality to guests, the performance of social duties, procreation, propagation of the race—all this along with the learning and teaching [of the Vedas]. According to Satyavacas of the line of Rathītara, truth alone should be practised; according to Taponitya, the son of Puruṣīsti, austerity alone; according to Nāka, the son of Mudgala, the learning and teaching [of the Vedas] alone, for that is austerity. (1.9.1)

Having taught the Vedas, the preceptor thus instructs the students:

Speak the truth. Practise dharma. Do not neglect the study [of the Vedas]. Having brought to the teacher the gift desired by him, [enter the householder's life and see that] the line of progeny is not cut off. Do not swerve from the truth. Do not swerve from dharma. Do not neglect [personal] welfare. Do not neglect prosperity. Do not neglect the study and teaching of the Vedas.

Do not neglect your duties to the gods and the manes. Treat your mother as God. Treat your father as God. Treat your teacher as God. Treat your guest as God. Whatever deeds are faultless, these are to be performed—not others. Whatever good works we have performed, perform them—not others.

Those brahmins who are superior to us—

you should comfort them by giving them seats. Whatever is to be given is to be given with faith—not without faith—according to one's plenty, with modesty, with fear, with sympathy.

If there arises in your mind any doubt concerning any act, or any doubt concerning conduct, you should conduct yourself in such matters as brahmins would conduct themselves—brahmins who are competent to judge, who [of their own accord] are devoted [to good deeds] and are not urged [to their performance] by others, and who are not too severe, but are lovers of dharma.

This is the rule. This is the teaching. This is the secret wisdom of the Vedas. This is the command [of God]. This you should observe—this alone. This is how character is to be cultivated. (1.11.1-4)

How would these students teach their children? By their own actions and attitudes and by their way of dealing with them.

Swami Vivekananda put Vedanta in a nutshell when he said, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.'<sup>11</sup> This has two clear implications: to follow it in our own life and to mould our attitude towards everyone beginning from our children. This should be understood alongside the other most important truth that each individual is unique in his manifestation of the same inherent Divinity.

So parents look upon their own lives as a relentless struggle to manifest the inherent Divinity and hence do not give up the cultivation of knowledge till the end of their life. They look upon their children as embodiments of the same Divinity and strive their utmost to aid their evolution by manifestation of the Divinity in their own individual, unique manner. When the child comes of age he approaches a suitable teacher for his higher education.

### Teacher Education

We shall now briefly touch upon the



most vital component of the education system: teacher education.

Quoting from the *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, Swami Vivekananda said, 'He who is learned in the scriptures, sinless, unpolluted by lust, and is the greatest knower of the Brahman is the real teacher.' (3.51) He further elaborated:

In regard to the teacher, we must see that he knows the spirit of the scriptures. The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas, and Korans; but they are all only words, syntax, etymology, philology, the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the *spirit* of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher. (3.48-9)

The second condition necessary in the teacher is sinlessness. (3.50)

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive—for money, name, or fame; his work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large.' (3.51)

What if one has not realized this state of perfection? Should he aspire to be a teacher or

not? He can, provided he knows that he is not perfect, that life is a struggle for perfection, that when he helps the student to manifest his perfection, it also helps him (the teacher) indirectly. Such a teacher should look upon his student with love and respect and struggle sincerely for his own perfection. This spirit should pervade the minds of teacher educators. \*

## References

1. *Bhagavadgītā*, 18.72.
2. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.1.1-7.
3. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1.20.
4. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.13.
5. *Gītā*, 18.67-68.
6. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.23.
7. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1.1.4-6.
8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.342.
9. *ibid.*, 4.490.
10. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 1.2.1.
11. *CW*, 1.124.

## Last Message of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

मा भैष्ट पुत्रि तव नास्ति भयं भवस्य  
श्रीरामकृष्णचरणौ शरणागताऽसि ।  
शान्तिं यदीच्छसि परां तव मा स्म दर्शः  
छिद्रं तु कस्यचिदपीह जगत्तवैव ॥

'O daughter! Do not be afraid! The fear of samsara does not exist for you, since you have taken refuge at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna! If you desire supreme peace, (then,) do not find fault with anybody here (in this world); because this world is verily yours!'

\* \* \*

'Why should you be afraid? You have seen the Master. What should frighten you? ... My child, if you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.'

—Swami Harshananda  
President, Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore

---

# Reflections on 11 September

SWAMI GAUTAMANANDA

Dear Dr Richard Haynes, Consul General of the United States of America, other distinguished guests on the stage, and my very dear brothers and sisters: As you all know, we have assembled here to express our feelings towards the sufferers of the tragedy in New York on 11 September 2001. I would like to share with you some feelings of millions of educated Indians on terrorism and the difference it has made in our lives, individual and collective.

Before that, let me recollect a great historic event that occurred on American soil on the same day, 11 September. That was the appearance of Swami Vivekananda on the platform of the Parliament of Religions held in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Strangely, in his very first lecture the great swami spoke mainly on tolerance and universal acceptance. He said, 'We believe not only in universal tolerance but we accept all religions as true.'<sup>1</sup> He quoted from a famous hymn to God Shiva composed by Pushpadanta several centuries ago: 'As different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.' (1.4)

He then concluded with the following wonderful words, which appear to me the most appropriate to be recalled before this meeting:

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. ... I fervently hope that the bell

that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal. (1.4)

Though we are yet to find out what all ideas worked behind that tragedy of 11 September 2001, we can be sure that an extremely fanatic ideology that considered all other ideologies as nothing and itself as the only ideology worth living for, was behind the dastardly act. Subsequent events have revealed that this fanatic ideology was inculcated into receptive minds of youths who become the instruments of terror that revealed itself at the WTC, New York. Fanaticism drives away all reason, making fanatics act like robots, or maybe even like animals. Fanaticism is the fuel that powers the engine of terrorism.

Fanaticism is witnessed in human life whenever people have been deprived of spiritual food. What is this spiritual food? It is made of disciplines or values of life that lead people to realize their oneness with the universe and with God, resulting in love for humanity and for God.

According to the sages of the Vedas, the oldest scriptures available to humanity, all this creation is God alone: '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma.*' It implies that divinity inheres in every being as its fundamental, inalienable nature. That is why Swami Vivekananda proclaimed the divinity of man in his many lectures in America. He thundered, 'Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature.' (1.11)

When this idea of the divinity of man is

widely taught not only in our schools and colleges, but also in all churches, mosques, pagodas, tabernacles and temples, where most innocent minds throng in millions—it is only then that people will receive the highest respect, irrespective of their gender, wealth, intelligence and power. Only then would the very idea of harming anyone, be it for any cause, appear abhorring. Only then can violence be radically uprooted from society.

In spite of the best technical and scientific education that people are getting nowadays, what seems to be lacking is the love and respect for fellow beings as brothers and sisters in God. This is what has made our scientists and politicians prepare nuclear bombs and biological weapons, ultimately killing all fellow feeling in the hearts of people. Is it any wonder if such people indulge in wholesale destruction of their fellow beings as in Hitler's pogrom or the tragedy of 11 September 2001 in New York? This is the impact that the terrorism of 11 September terrorism has made on thinking people like me.

The difference it has made in my and my countrymen's life is that it has awakened a sense of urgency to educate people against falling prey to the brainwashing ideologies masked under various garbs like jihad. In killing innocents, there can be no religion, but only demon's dance.

Men who join such fanatics' training camps are generally poor and deprived. They are brainwashed into thinking that killing others not of their fold will confer on them the gifts of heaven and that its unending joys are a reward for their religious and pious act!

Generally, those who fall prey to such brainwashing are people who do not have the basic liberties of a democratic rule, but are led by the nose by selfish politicians. We have to stop all help to such non-democracies and pseudo-democracies. We have to push on with meaningful education supplemented with scientific skills and spiritual values that will make our citizens not only efficient but also good. Goodness can be summarized as truthfulness, a feeling of the brotherhood of all humanity, sympathy to serve the needy and a firm conviction that humanity is one divine family; to hurt anyone would mean inviting unhappiness on ourselves. I would like to conclude with a simple prayer: 'Please bless us all, O God, with the will to spread these ideas of love and brotherhood among all our brothers and sisters from wherever we are.'

Thank you.

\*

### Reference

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 1.3.

## 'Unity in Diversity in the Context of Indian Culture'

A.K. Chatterjee

### (For the Special Attention of our Readers)

Our readers may kindly note that the article 'Unity in Diversity in the Context of Indian Culture' by A. K. Chatterjee published in the September 2002 issue of this journal (pages 475-8) is based on a lecture *Unity in Diversity as the Main Tenet of Indian Culture* delivered by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, President, India International Centre, New Delhi 110 003, at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Kolkata, on 29 January 2001. Mr A. K. Chatterjee admits and regrets that through inadvertence he failed to acknowledge his indebtedness to Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan.

—Editor

---

# Vedanta: Death and the Art of Dying

PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

None of us can imagine ourselves ever ceasing to be. King Yudhishtira of ancient India when asked ‘What is the greatest wonder in the whole world?’ replied: ‘That we see people dying all around us and never think that we too will die.’ Even when we fall asleep, our sense of self persists throughout our dreams. And upon awaking from dreamless sleep, we know who we are as soon as our feet touch the floor. This ‘I’ is the thread of continuity that runs throughout our lives, from birth to death.

## Our True Nature

Vedanta says, this ‘I’ is but a faint reflection of our true nature, which is divine. Our divinity is the Atman—the higher Self—unborn and undying. The Atman is one with God—Brahman, the existent Reality, which is pure Consciousness. So if we cannot imagine ourselves to be nonexistent, it is because our essential nature is eternal, though we are unaware of it.

Most of us falsely identify ourselves with our little self, the ego, which blinds us to our eternal nature. Though fundamentally spiritual beings, we are deluded into thinking that we are separate psycho-physical entities. From birth, the infant ego is falsely superimposed upon the Atman, pure Spirit. As we grow to adulthood, the ego inflates itself, reaching out more and more to identify itself with the body and mind. We say as a matter of course, ‘I am a man’ or ‘I am a woman’, ‘I am a Hispanic’ or ‘I am a Caucasian’, ‘I am standing’ or ‘I am sitting’, ‘I am happy’ or ‘I am sad.’ We extend the ego even further by claiming external objects and conditions as our own, such as ‘this car is mine’ or ‘I am a Democrat.’ As superimpositions multiply, so does our

ability to stretch the envelope of normalcy to include such fantastic claims as ‘We bombed Afghanistan’, ‘I carry life insurance’, or ‘I own a lot of property.’

Though the ego continues to enlarge and identify itself with external objects of the universe, the inner Self remains utterly detached—the witness of all our actions. Yet, at the same time, this witness Self makes possible all our mental activity by lending to the mind the reflected light of pure Consciousness, without which our private illusions could not exist.

When we let go of our identification with the ego, we become liberated from the little self and exist in the Atman. But the further we become entrenched in the illusory reality of the ego, the greater are our chances of reincarnating from life to life. This is the law of karma and reincarnation, set forth in the *Bhagavad-gita*, the Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras*, and other Hindu scriptures. In the *Gita*, while preparing for war on Kurukshetra, the battlefield of life, Arjuna listens as Lord Krishna, his teacher, describes the law of reincarnation: ‘There was never a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor any of these kings. Nor is there any future when we shall cease to be. Just as the dweller in this body passes through childhood, youth and old age, so at death he merely passes into another kind of body. The wise are not deceived by that.’<sup>1</sup>

From his cosmic standpoint, Krishna explains:

Worn-out garments  
Are shed by the body:  
Worn-out bodies  
Are shed by the dweller  
Within the body.  
New bodies are donned

By the dweller, like garments.<sup>2</sup>

### The Three Bodies

The Atman is encased, as it were, in three bodies: gross (physical), subtle (mental) and causal (ego).<sup>3</sup> At death, only the physical body dies; the subtle body, along with its underlying causal body, accompanies the reincarnating soul, the *jivatman*, effecting the conditions of its future birth.

During a person's lifetime, the gross, subtle and causal bodies require nourishment in order to maximize their inherent potential. To remain healthy, we provide our physical body with food and exercise. To cultivate healthy emotions and refine our mental faculties, we

into a time-tested metaphysical science of mind. The word karma in Sanskrit means action: mental or physical. It also means the result of action. Past actions, springing from thought waves of desire, cultivate future desires, which, in turn, result in actions.<sup>4</sup>

What we call 'character' is the sum total of our karmas, which are conscious and unconscious desires, thoughts and actions. Like waves that disturb a lake's surface and then form sandbanks on the lake bottom, karmas ripple across the surface of the mind, which retains their residual effects as latent tendencies, called *samskaras*. These latent tendencies reside in the subconscious and unconscious recesses of the mind. Repeated karmas—such as resentments, acts of kindness or outbursts of anger—predispose us to find occasions for their repeated expressions in our everyday lives. Thus thoughts and actions work on each other to form mental and physical habits. These habits are the building blocks of character, which constitutes the

subtle body and—along with the causal body, or 'T'-consciousness—cloaks the Atman.

### Karma and Rebirth

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (4.4.5-6) explains how the law of karma predetermines the soul's future birth:

As is one's desire, so is one's destiny. For, as our desire is, so is our will; as our will is, so is our deed; and as our deed is, so is our reward, whether good or bad.

We act according to the desires to which we cling. After death we go to the next world, bearing in the mind the subtle impressions of our deeds; and after reaping there the harvest of such deeds, return again to this world of action. Thus whoever has desire continues subject to rebirth.<sup>5</sup>

'But,' says the *Upanishad* (4.4.6), 'one in whom desire is stilled suffers no rebirth. After

***Thus, in Vedanta, we find two separate Hindu doctrines pertaining to the continuity of consciousness after death. The first is reincarnation, to which every person is subject. The second is eternal life, known in Sanskrit as moksha or liberation.***

nourish the subtle body with artistic and intellectual stimuli. For the causal body, the innermost sheath of ego-consciousness veiling the Atman, yoga is the food that provides nourishment.

Yoga practices transform and renew the mind, spiritualizing one's consciousness so that the Atman may be revealed. However, this food is often neglected. By starving the causal body, which permeates our gross and subtle bodies, we starve our entire psycho-physical being. Thus most people remain sheathed in ignorance of their true nature and subject to the law of karma and reincarnation.

### Karma and Character

Before we can transform the mind, we must first understand it. Eastern psychology, formulated by Patanjali, one of the ancient seers of India, incorporates the law of karma



death, having attained to the highest, desiring only the Self, such a soul goes to no other world. Realizing Brahman, one becomes Brahman.<sup>6</sup>

### Death and Afterlife

What is the process of death? 'One neither sees, nor smells, nor tastes,' the *Bṛihad-aranyaka Upanishad* describes (4.4.1-2, 6):

One does not speak nor hear. One does not think and does not know; for all the organs, detaching themselves from the physical body, unite with the subtle body. Then the [uppermost] point of one's heart, where the nerves join [the *sushumna*] is lighted by the light of the Self, and by that light the dying departs either through the eye, through the gate of the skull, or through some other aperture of the body.<sup>7</sup> When one thus departs, life departs; and when life departs, all the functions of the vital principle depart. The Self remains conscious, and, conscious, the dying person goes to a new abode. The deeds of this life and the impressions they leave behind follow.<sup>8</sup>

According to the *Bhagavadgita* there are two paths by which the departing soul may leave the body: the *devayana*, or path of light, and the *pitriyana*, or path of darkness.<sup>9</sup> An illumined soul departs along the path of light and may temporarily reside in heavenly realms such as *brahmaloka*, before final liberation. However, the imperfect soul travels along the path of darkness to temporary celestial or dark realms in order to live out the effects of good and bad deeds, and then reincarnates.

### The Four Yogas

Thus, in Vedanta, we find two separate Hindu doctrines pertaining to the continuity of consciousness after death. The first is reincarnation, to which every person is subject. The second is eternal life, known in Sanskrit as *moksha* or liberation. *Moksha* comes to those

who through the practice of yoga transcend the ego and, in so doing, see through this world-illusion, thus freeing themselves from the round of birth, death and rebirth.

To those desiring liberation, Vedanta offers a smorgasbord of yoga practices. Each yoga or path to union with God, corresponds to one of the four aspects of human nature. *Bhakti yoga* is a natural path of purifying emotions by establishing a devotional relationship with God. In this way an aspirant can 'ripen' the ego by raising it to the level of child, friend or beloved of God. *Jnana yoga* appeals to the intellect because of its rigorous scientific and logical analysis of the nature of Reality. The follower of *jnana yoga* refutes what is impermanent for what is abiding, a process which culminates in direct knowledge of the underlying immaterial reality of Brahman. For active temperaments, *karma yoga* subdues the ego by surrendering it to physical acts of self-

***It is impossible to forget the haunting sounds of chanting and wailing, the smell of hot ash and the golden hue of sunset reflected on the Ganges at that time. It is a vivid memory of death—and of profound and tangible holiness.***

lessness and to service of God within others. For the contemplative, *raja yoga* calms, deepens and centres the aspirant through the daily practice of withdrawing the mind from the external world and focusing it on one's ideal of God within the heart.

By nourishing the causal body in these ways—by ripening, negating, subduing or forgetting the ego—the aspirant purifies the veils of the three bodies (body, mind and ego) that encase the Atman. A balance of the four yogas spiritually integrates all aspects of our nature. Thus strengthened, we begin to perceive ourselves more as—what Stephen Levine so aptly states in his book *Who Dies?*—

'spiritual beings with physical experiences rather than as physical beings with spiritual experiences'.

### Death and Spiritual Life

To intensify our spiritual life, it becomes natural to invite death into our practices. Sometimes an aspirant may study scriptural passages pertaining to death: memorize them, live with each one for a period of days, and meditate upon them until he awakens to a deeper insight into its meaning. This is one type of meditation on death.

Another way of meditating on death is to follow the example of great mystics like Ramakrishna, who sometimes chose to meditate at night in a cremation ground. In India, this is possible—one of the most famous cremation grounds being Manikarnika Ghat on the bank of the River Ganges, in Banaras, the

***As nuns we have witnessed death and have served many devotees in the process of dying. It is a privilege: each death is memorable and, in its own unique way, a kind of meditation.***

City of Light. There Ramakrishna had the vision of the Divine Mother of the Universe, walking amidst the funeral pyres of the deceased, untying the knots of their ignorance, as Lord Shiva whispered into their ears the mantra of final liberation.<sup>10</sup>

Any pilgrim can visit Manikarnika Ghat. At dusk one may take a boat down the River Ganges and watch as swathed bodies are borne to the steps of the ghat and placed on pyres to await the eldest family member's sandalwood torch. It is impossible to forget the haunting sounds of chanting and wailing, the smell of hot ash and the golden hue of sunset reflected on the Ganges at that time. It is a vivid memory of death—and of profound and tangible holiness.

Followers of jnana yoga, who discriminate between the real and the unreal, the permanent and the transitory, systematically impress upon themselves the impermanence of their own body and mind and the three states of consciousness: waking, dream and dreamless sleep. This is another type of meditation on death.

For many Vedantists, a mantra initiation by the guru is another transformative rite, symbolizing the death of the ego and spiritual rebirth. In order to sharpen concentration and quicken spiritual progress after initiation, gurus sometimes exhort their students to meditate as though Yama, the King of Death, is standing at their back. To illustrate this point, Ramakrishna used to tell his disciples the story of a student who asked his teacher, 'Sir, please tell me how I can see God.'

'Come with me,' said the guru, 'and I shall show you.' He took the disciple to a lake, and both of them got into the water. Suddenly the teacher pressed the disciple's head under the water. After a few moments he released him and the disciple raised his head and stood up. The guru asked him, 'How did you feel?' The disciple said, 'Oh! I thought I should die; I was panting for breath.' The teacher said, 'When you feel like that for God, then you will know that you haven't long to wait for His vision.'<sup>11</sup>

### A Case in Point

Tim, who first used to frequent our bookstore, was a unique example of this kind of yearning for God. Patients like him diagnosed with AIDS died a social death long before their physical death. 'My disease has become my guru,' Tim disclosed to me, as one by one his friends declined to see him. During this painful transition of several years, time became precious to Tim and so did his visits to the Vedanta temple. At first he came once a week—then two, three times and finally daily. As AIDS increasingly ravaged his body, Tim

sought refuge in the peaceful atmosphere of the temple as often as three times a day, struggling to practise the meditation instructions he had received from his spiritual teacher, the swami in charge of our centre. During the last year of his life, Tim was hospitalized several times. Each time he was released, we heard similar stories of his mistreatment and social outcasting, often paid to AIDS patients.

On the last day of Tim's life, a senior nun and I went to visit him. The stench in his hospital room was unbearable, syringes and blood-stained pads left in the room by his night nurses. Tim was semi-conscious, in obvious pain, and seemed to be suffering an inner turmoil, as though his soul was alternately drowning and gasping for breath. As is the Hindu custom, we offered Tim Ganges water—holy water—and he opened his mouth to receive the drops. There was a palpable sense of urgency in the room. We began to chant aloud the name of God: the name of Tim's Chosen Ideal. Minutes passed before we noticed that Tim's mouth was moving: he too was silently chanting the name of God. Tears trickled down his cheeks from the outer corners of his eyes. Then suddenly, in his semi-conscious state, Tim lifted himself up from his bed and turned to face us. A blissful smile bathed his face. Overcome with emotion, we left the room. When I returned, Tim was quiet and indrawn, tears still trickling down his cheeks. Ten minutes later, he passed away.

As nuns we have witnessed death and have served many devotees in the process of dying. It is a privilege: each death is memorable and, in its own unique way, a kind of meditation. Just before one dies, Ganges water is often administered and sometimes verses from sacred scriptures relating to death are read or chanted aloud in Sanskrit or English. These rituals purify the body and mind of the dying.

## The Factor that Determines Afterlife

The *Prashna Upanishad* (3.10) and the *Bhagavadgita* (8.6) tell us that the most prominent thought in one's consciousness at the moment of death determines the course of the soul leaving the body. It is, therefore, very auspicious for the dying to hear the name of God chanted aloud by those present at the bedside. Throughout spiritual life, an aspirant repeats the mantra, the sacred name of his Chosen Ideal, and, in his so doing, it permeates the conscious, subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind. As a result, before death, when the mind is no longer able to remain focused, the spiritual aspirant's most predominant thought stored in the subconscious, the mantra, bubbles up of its own accord to the conscious mind.

***By facing death, meditating upon death and ultimately embracing death, the Vedantist overcomes a normal instinctual fear with the courage of religious conviction, the strength of spiritual practice and the ground of philosophic reason.***

## Conclusion

Is Vedanta's attitude towards death life-negating? By facing death, meditating upon death and ultimately embracing death, the Vedantist overcomes a normal instinctual fear with the courage of religious conviction, the strength of spiritual practice and the ground of philosophical reason. Swami Vivekananda wrote in a letter dated 20 January 1895 to an American woman who had lost her father:

Coming and going is all pure delusion. The soul never comes or goes. Where is the place to which it shall go when all space is *in the soul*? When shall be the time for entering and departing when all time is *in the soul*?

The earth moves, causing the illusion of the movement of the sun; but the sun does not move. So ... Nature is moving, changing, lifting

veil after veil, turning over leaf after leaf of this grand book—while the witnessing soul drinks in knowledge, unmoved, unchanged. All souls that ever have been, are, or shall be, are all in the present tense ... standing at one geometrical point. Because the idea of space does not occur in the soul, therefore all that were ours, are ours, and will be ours, *are* always with us, *were* always with us, and *will be* always with us. We are in them. They are in us.<sup>12</sup>

With this knowledge, every death we face—our relatives', friends', spouse's and ultimately our own—becomes an opportunity to expand our definition of consciousness, and—if we are open to it—to expand our *own* consciousness, and thus transcend death. \*

## Notes and References

1. *The Song of God: Bhagavad- Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1969), 2.12-3.
2. *ibid.*, 2.22.
3. See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.2-5.
4. See Chapter I, 'Yoga and Its Aims', in *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1971).
5. *The Upanishads: Breath of the Eternal*, trans.

Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1947), 177-8. *The edited translation is mine.*

6. *ibid.*, 178. See also *Gita*, 8.9-15.
7. The *sushumna* is the spiritual channel situated within the spinal column, extending from its base to the brain, through which awakened spiritual energy rises within the human body. It is also called the pathway to Brahman.
- According to Swami Satprakashananda, one of the scholars of the Ramakrishna Order, 'The impressions of karma gathered in the mind are lit up by the luminous self as in the dream state. Those thoughts, experiences and desires that prevail at the time determine the way the self departs.' See Swami Satprakashananda, *The Goal and the Way* (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 1977), 178.
8. *Upanishads*, 176. *The edited translation is mine.*
9. *Gita*, 8.23-6.
10. See *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1990), 173.
11. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 674.
12. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 5.68-9.

## The Angels

In the 1870s a bishop who had charge of a small denominational college made his annual visit and stayed with the principal. The bishop boasted a firm belief that everything that could be invented had been invented.

The college head thought otherwise. 'In 50 years,' he said, 'men will learn how to fly like birds.'

Shocked, the bishop replied, 'Flight is reserved for angels and you are guilty of blasphemy.'

The name of the bishop was Milton Wright and at home he had two small sons—Orville and Wilbur.

# Jābāla Upaniṣad

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ATMAPRIYANANDA

## Section Four (continued)

Procedure for renunciation by one who maintains the sacred fire

आहिताग्निसंन्यासविधिः

तद्धैके प्राजापत्यामेवेष्टिं कुर्वन्ति । तदु तथा न कुर्यात् । आग्नेयीमेव कुर्यात् । अग्निर्हि वै प्राणः । प्राणमेवैतया करोति । त्रैधातवीयामेव कुर्यात् । एतयैव त्रयो धातवो यदुत सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति ।

अयं ते योनिर्ऋत्वियो यतो जातो अरोचथाः ।

तं जानन्नग्न आरोहाथा नो वर्धया रयिम् ॥

इत्यनेन मन्त्रेणाग्निमाजिघ्रेत् । एष ह वा अग्रेर्योनिर्यः प्राणः । प्राणं गच्छ स्वाहेत्येवमेवैतदाह ॥२॥

2. Well, then, some [law givers] prescribe the sacrifice called *prājāpatya*<sup>1</sup> [when one who maintains the sacred fire (*āhitāgni*) embraces *sannyāsa*]. But he should not do so [in spite of their saying thus]. [On the other hand,] he shall perform only the *āgneyi* sacrifice [in which Fire (Agni) is the deity]. [For] Fire is verily the vital force (*prāṇa*).<sup>2</sup> Through this [sacrifice], he does [strengthen] the *prāṇa* alone. [Then] he shall perform the *traidhātaviyā*<sup>3</sup> sacrifice. Through this [sacrifice], the three elements of Fire, namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* [are strengthened].<sup>4</sup> [Having performed this sacrifice according to scriptural injunctions,] he shall smell [the smoke] of the holy fire, [reciting the following] *mantra*: ‘O Fire, this [*prāṇa*] is your source.’<sup>5</sup> You are effulgent because you are born of *Sūtrātman*.<sup>6</sup> Knowing Him [*Sūtrātman*],<sup>7</sup> may you merge [in Him]. Thereupon,<sup>8</sup> augment our wealth [of Self-Knowledge].<sup>9</sup> This *prāṇa*, verily, is the source of *agni*.<sup>10</sup> ‘May you [O Agni] go [back] to *prāṇa* [that is, your own source or cause]. *Svāhā*.’<sup>11</sup> —this [much] is all that this [*mantra* means] to say.

Method of renunciation by one who does not maintain the sacred fire

निरग्निकसंन्यासविधिः

ग्रामादग्निमाहृत्य पूर्ववदग्निमाघ्रापयेत् । यदग्निं न विन्देदप्सु जुहुयात् । आपो वै सर्वा देवताः । सर्वाभ्यो देवताभ्यो जुहोमि स्वाहेति हुत्वोद्धृत्य प्राश्नीयात्साज्यं हविरनामयम् । मोक्षमन्त्रस्त्रय्येवं विन्देत् । तद्वह्य तदुपासितव्यम् । एवमेवैतद्भगवन्निति वै याज्ञवल्क्य ॥३॥

3. Having procured the sacred fire from the village,<sup>12</sup> he shall have the fire smelt as [described] earlier.<sup>13</sup> If he cannot procure the holy fire, he shall offer the oblations in water. For water is verily all the gods. Offering the oblation with the *mantra* ‘I offer [this] oblation to all the gods. *Svāhā*’, he shall pick up [a small portion of] the offered oblation<sup>14</sup> mixed with clarified butter and partake of it, for it is [considered] healthy. He shall realize that the *mantra* [leading to] liberation (*mokṣa*) is the essence of the three Vedas.<sup>15</sup> It is Brahman and is to be worshipped. [Having heard this teaching, Janaka said:] ‘Indeed, so it is, O Bhagavan (revered, all-knowing sage) Yājñavalkya.’

(to be continued)



## References

1. Prajāpati (Brahma) is the presiding deity (*deva*) for this sacrifice, and hence the name *prājapatya*.
2. Agni being the main deity and on account of his being the *sūtra* (that is, *Sūtrātman* or *prāṇa*).
3. A well-known sacrifice (*yajña*) in which Indra is the deity.
4. Why it is appropriate to perform the *traidhātavīyā* sacrifice is being explained: by this sacrifice, the following three elements, which are in fact the three forms of Agni, namely, *sattva* (white), *rajas* (red) and *tamas* (black), are strengthened.
5. Agni was said to be *prāṇa*. This *prāṇa* should be taken as the *mukhya prāṇa* (the essential vital force), while the *prāṇa* which is said to be the source, should be taken as *virāt* (consciousness conditioned or limited by the macrocosmic matter, whose microcosmic counterpart is the gross body). Technically, *virāt* is the source of the *mukhya prāṇa*.
6. *Sūtrātman*, also called *Hiraṇyagarbha*, is consciousness limited or conditioned by the cosmic mind (or intelligence, *buddhi*) and is the subtle (*sūkṣma*) aspect of *virāt* (which is gross, *sthūla*).
7. The aspirant embracing *sannyāsa*, prays thus to the *agni* which he had been maintaining so long with devotion: 'Knowing *Sūtrātman* to be your source, you remain merely as *prāṇa*, your own ultimate cause.' The aspirant for *sannyāsa*, who will cease to have anything to do with *agni* after *sannyāsa*, thus prays to the object of his long adoration, requesting it to return to its original source, for it has fulfilled its purpose in his life.
8. That is, on merging into your own ultimate source (or cause).
9. Wealth here means *ātma-jñāna* or knowledge of the Self. The spiritual aspirant embracing *sannyāsa* prays fervently to the fire which he had tended so long with great love and care to reward him at the time of departure with the wealth of *ātma-jñāna*, his only objective in the path of *sannyāsa*.
10. The *śruti* or the Upaniṣad is hereby repeating the statement made by the aspirant in his prayer to the *agni*. This is by way of approval, confirmation and corroboration of the aspirant's prayer just on the eve of his embracing *sannyāsa*.
11. *Śvāhā* is a *mantra* uttered while offering oblations to gods (*devas*).
12. From the house of a *śrotriya*, a person well versed in the Vedas, having comprehended their inner meaning.
13. Upaniṣad Brahmayogin comments on this as follows: He (the aspirant for *sannyāsa*) shall recite the *virājā homa mantras* as well as the 'Puruṣa Sūkta' and after the final oblation (*pūrṇāhūti*), recite the above *mantra* by way of prayer to the *agni* ('O Fire ...'). Thereafter, as directed by the officiating priest of the *sannyāsa* ceremony, he shall smell the fire as described.
14. This is technically called *hutaśeṣa* (literally, 'what remains after the oblation'). Partaking of it is considered purifying, just like *prasāda* after *pūjā*.
15. The *mantra* that is the cause of liberation from one's ignorance is *praṇava* or *Om*. He shall realize 'I am the embodiment of the meaning of *praṇava*.' —Upaniṣad Brahmayogin's commentary.

Never fear; pray to the Lord. He will make everything favourable. He is not a stranger. Know from the bottom of your heart that He is your very own; then pray to Him. Everything will be all right. This body is ephemeral, but the Lord is eternal. You must make Him your own. Never be discouraged. Summon up your mental strength and constantly think of God. He is the refuge of all. Dedicate yourself to Him completely and be at rest. All fear and anxiety will leave of themselves and a new strength will flow into your heart.

—Swami Turiyananda

---

## ❧ Glimpses of Holy Lives ❧

### An Eye for an Eye!

Uduppur was a thick forest inhabited by hunters. The place had a humble temple for Lord Kartikeya, who was its presiding deity. Nagan was the king of hunters and Tattai his devoted wife. Their son Tinnan ('the strong one') was now sixteen years old and was ready to be crowned king. On an auspicious day Nagan went to the Kartikeya temple with his wife and their son. Before his coronation, Tinnan had to prove his prowess by killing a wild animal. Devaratti, the old woman who worshipped at the temple, welcomed them. Worship over, Devaratti blessed Tinnan that he would live a great life.

Tinnan bowed before Devaratti and his parents and set out on his maiden hunt. Several hunters followed him blowing pipes and beating drums in joy. Tinnan went after a wild boar, a tricky animal to hunt. His friends Nanan and Kadan followed him. After a long chase the animal fell to Tinnan's sword. Tired after the long chase, Tinnan and his friends decided to roast the boar and appease their hunger before resuming the hunt. With their kill they came to the bank of a river named Svarnamukhi. Tinnan quenched his thirst and glanced at the hill before him. His mind felt an indescribable pull emanating from it. 'What is that, Nana?' he asked his friend. 'That's the Kalahasti hill, which has a temple dedicated to Kudumittevar, Lord Shiva.' 'Have you been there?' 'Yes.' 'Shall we go now?' Nanan agreed. Tinnan asked Kadan to roast the animal before they returned.

Both of them set out to explore the hill. As he ascended it, Tinnan felt love surging in his heart, a love not experienced before. They reached the wooded peak of the hill. On removing a heap of creepers and plants, Tinnan discovered a tiny platform on which stood a

shivalinga. He knelt before the linga with folded hands and a silent cry within, 'my Lord.' He embraced the linga and looked up. The linga was wet all over. Many flowers, leaves and fruits were strewn over it. Tinnan removed them all, wiped the Lord clean and again embraced Him.

'These leaves and flowers must have been thrown by a brahmin. I've seen him here earlier,' said Nanan. Tinnan wondered, 'What is the point in climbing all the way up, just to litter my Lord's dwelling place? If a person really loved the Lord, would he not offer Him the best food? What food shall I give my Lord? It's already noon. The Lord must be hungry.' Tinnan remembered the boar being roasted below and raced down the hill with Nanan. Kadan was busy with his job and was alarmed at Tinnan racing towards him and gasping for breath. Tinnan examined different portions of the meat, first by pressing with his fingers and then by tasting and chewing them. Satisfied, he placed choice portions on a teak leaf. Tinnan started for the hill, meat in hand. Unable to guess what happened to Tinnan, both Nanan and Kadan returned to their places.

After going a few steps Tinnan wondered whether the Lord needed a bath before his food. He returned to Svarnamukhi, dipped himself in the river and filled his mouth with water. He plucked some flowers nearby and placed them on his tuft. Now he ascended the hill, satisfied that he had with him not only flowers and water—the usual offerings of the brahmin—but also food for his Lord.

He reached the summit and found that some flowers and leaves from trees around had fallen on the Lord. He set them all aside with his slippers and lovingly bathed the Lord with the water in his mouth. Offering Him the

flowers from his tuft, he then devotedly placed the meat offering before the Lord and held it before His mouth to eat. It was now dusk. Armed with his bow and arrows, Tinnan spent the entire night at the place, to protect his Lord from wild animals. At sunrise he left the place to resume his hunt.

Shivagocharyar, the devoted brahmin who worshipped the shivalinga regularly, reached the place and was scandalized to see a footprint on the linga and pieces of meat and bones and a teak leaf strewn around. He wondered, 'Who could have thus defiled my Lord? Must be the hunters. Couldn't they find any other place to have their food?' Greatly pained, he cleaned the place, washed himself in the Svarnamukhi and returned with water and flowers for the Lord. He bathed the Lord, offered Him flowers and left.

Tinnan returned this time with honey-soaked venison and a beehive—tasted and sorted beforehand—and flowers and water as before. He cleaned the place and bathed and fed his beloved Lord. He guarded the place from wildlife throughout the day and night, and left early in the morning. Shivagocharyar returned the next day and painfully cleaned the place and performed his puja. Six days passed thus with two different pujas and offerings for the Lord.

Puzzled and pained, Shivagocharyar tearfully prayed to the Lord to punish the person committing the sacrilege. Shiva appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Yes, he is a hunter after all. But he has deep love for Me and knows Me in reality. I am pleased by his worship. Come tomorrow and witness the happenings.'

Next noon Shivagocharyar saw bad omens on his way up the hill. On nearing his Lord he hid himself behind a bush. Ah! What was that? Blood was trickling from the Lord's right eye! Before he could get up and go near, he heard footsteps. It was Tinnan with his usual offerings. Seeing blood from his Beloved's eye, he fainted and collapsed—with

his bow, meat offering, flowers, water and all. He rose as fast as he fell, rushed forward and wiped the blood, which did not stop. He wondered who could have done this—enemies, men, beasts? He fixed an arrow to the bow and ran down the hill looking for the enemy. Finding none, he came back, embraced the Lord, and wept and wailed inconsolably. He remembered hunters using herbs to heal arrow wounds. He brought the herbs, crushed them and applied the juice to his Lord's eye. It did not help. He then remembered the adage, 'flesh for flesh will cure an ill of the flesh.' But where to go for an eye? Tinnan thought, 'Why, I have two.' He was so happy at the remedy and without losing a moment gouged out his right eye with his sharp arrow and fixed it on the Lord's bleeding eye. And lo! The bleeding stopped. Tinnan danced for joy.

Shivagocharyar was stunned. But more was to follow. The Lord's left eye now started bleeding. With one hand on the bleeding socket that till now held his right eye, Tinnan saw with his other eye blood oozing from the Lord's left eye, but said, 'Don't worry my Lord, I have the medicine.' But if he removed his second eye too, how would he locate the Lord's bleeding eye? Tinnan placed his left big toe near the Lord's bleeding eye and was about to pierce his left eye with the arrow. The Lord's hand then emerged from the linga and held his hand. 'Stop, Kannappa, my dear!' said Shiva three times and asked him from then on to be ever at His right side. He then appeared before Tinnan along with His consort Parvati. 'Kannappa' in Tamil is a term of endearment. Here it also means one who placed his eye [on the Lord]. Shivagocharyar learnt that it is only intense love for the Lord that counts; formal devotion, Agamas and yogas are but secondary.

By his act of self-effacing love for the Lord, Tinnan from then on came to be known as Kannappa Nayanar, one of the sixty-three Shaiva saints of Tamil Nadu. \*

---

# From 'Possession' to 'Passage': A Study of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

DR M SIVARAMKRISHNA

## Existential Belief in God

The eminent Catholic thinker Stanislas Breton suggests a distinction between 'secondary definitions of and the existential belief in God'. In an interview he gave, he pointed out: 'to refuse the attempts to possess God by reducing Him to an ontological substance or political power—that is, an ideological weapon—is not to disbelieve in God: On the contrary, I would argue that it is a way of remaining faithful to one's belief.'

## Proposition, Predication and Existence

Characterizing God as 'a passage not a possession', he further notes that 'the secondary definitions of God in terms of proposition ("I believe *that* God exists") or predication (God is this or that) must be continually brought back to their primary origin in existential belief ("I believe *in* God.")' Explaining the existential belief he points out that it 'involves the believer in an intentional relation with God which is perhaps best described in terms of trust and transition.'<sup>1</sup>

Breton's ideas exist in the radical ethos of contemporary theological polemics—which is not our concern. What is of interest in these observations is that they seem strangely (for the devotees, startlingly) relevant—illuminatingly relevant—for the *content* and *structure* of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

## Uniqueness of the Gospel

The uniqueness of *Kathamrita* is now not a claim advanced by pious devotees but a settled fact on twentieth-century hagiography. This is a phenomenon of several dimensions. In the original Bengali the text follows the

Vaishnava hagiographic tradition, by and large. In translation it crosses the barriers of language and using a Christian religious term 'the gospel' it forges an English idiom for specifically Indian/Hindu perceptions.

## The Gospel: Connotational Range

Christian in its overtones and origins, the word according to the *Shorter Oxford* suggests 1. News, glad tidings, associated generally with God, but though rarely, with a doctrine preached with fervour as a means of social or political salvation; 2. Christian revelation, religion or dispensation contrasted with the Old Testament; 3. Any revelation from heaven; 4. The record of Christ's life and teachings written by the four evangelists; 5. Metaphorically anything authoritative, authentic, true.

## Kathamrita as Exemplification

The *Gospel* shares all these features except that there is only one recorder. A book of revelation heralding the Master's personal demonstration of the message of 'as many faiths so many paths'. The new dispensation is an expansion of the denominational word 'gospel' to the contours of a vision encompassing the spiritual consciousness behind plurality of faiths. The word retains and subsumes the original associations but simultaneously signals an ethos free from any foundational finality. Thus revelation constantly juxtaposes vision and word, gesture and symbol. That is what makes the *Gospel* unique.

## God: A Passage, not a Possession

The word 'passage' suggests among other things a transition from one state or con-

dition to another. This is the spirit of the *Gospel* as distinct from the *Great Master* and their portrayals/evocation of Ramakrishna. We see him discoursing with such clarity, acuity and alertness that the devotees listen enthralled; within a split second he plunges into samadhi. Quite often, as in M's first encounter, two opposed processes might be passing in the unitive consciousness of the Master. Even as the Master listens to the answers M gives for his questions, M 'noticed that now and then the Master seems to become absent-minded'. Thus from idea through *bhava* to samadhi is a common passage with this God-man holding God-consciousness as the only thing worth aiming for and acquiring in life. Interspersed are ecstatic singing and dancing with abandon that reinforce the overall atmosphere of live spirituality.

Another remarkable example is seen in the Master's visit to Vidyasagar. Discussing different aspects of spiritual life, he declares that scholarship is futile and giving this idea further edge plunges into singing a song which dramatizes this idea: 'Who is there that can understand what Mother Kali is?/ Even the six darśanas are powerless to reveal Her. ...'<sup>2</sup>

A further step in this passage from idea to music is samadhi: 'While singing, the Master went into samādhi. He was seated on the bench, facing west, the palms of his hands joined together, his body erect and motionless. Everyone watched him expectantly. Vidyasagar, too, was speechless and could not take his eyes from the Master.' (107)

Instances such as this abounding in the *Gospel* suggest the experience of God as a process without any fixation in polemics.

### Passage as Inclusive Pluralism

Passage also implies a passing in thought or speech from one point, idea or subject to another. Transmission or transference metaphorically suggests a path, a road or a bridge with both entrance and exit. Thus passage is

not a terminus but a connecting bridge. These are the passages of interfaith communication that the *Gospel* signals, and an inclusive pluralism emerges as its most remarkable feature. The formalistic plurality—ideas, songs, parables, descriptions, enactments, scenes within scenes, texts within texts—of the *Gospel* is only a structural counterpart of the Master's authentic experience of varied faiths. An abundance of narrative devices offers passages to the pluralistic ambience of the *Gospel*. Ontological finalities are annulled but a personal commitment to a belief or its form is never allowed to be submerged by it. One can even say that ideological weapons emerging out of religious beliefs without experiential core are dismissed as 'possessions'. In this sense trust of one's own faith provides transition to other faiths.

### Secondary Definitions

Viewed thus, Breton's observations about propositions and predications vis-a-vis their primary origins in existential belief in God have interesting relevance for the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. These observations, besides explaining many things implicitly, explicitly make a distinction between 'secondary definitions' and primary origins. In other words, propositions and predications (of God) are not in themselves suspect. For propositions, to use Ramakrishna's image, are like so many necessary thorns in the flesh of faith: for these also have their origins there only. It is only inability to continually return to these origins that freezes them as propositions and predications. These must be 'continually brought back,' Breton reminds us, 'to their primary origin in existential belief.'

One can look at Ramakrishna's metaphor of the almanac: no amount of squeezing it will yield a drop of rain. *That* is the nature of secondary definitions or propositions and predications. For rain, you have to *wait* and *watch*. No prediction will ensure it. Similarly, picturesque propositions do not wrench any rain



from the sky.

### Interplay of the Three in the *Gospel*

Propositions, predications and actual objective record of continuous return to the origins of these propositions and predications is the triple-pillared 'structure' of Ramakrishna's *Gospel*. There are propositions galore, repeated tirelessly; there are predications equally abundant. Yet in an instant both get submerged in their origins when Ramakrishna plunges into the experiential realm. For example, there is the remarkable instance where Ramakrishna declares his experience: 'God talked to me. It was not merely His vision. Yes, He talked to me. Under the banyan-tree I saw Him coming from the Ganges. Then we laughed so much! By way of playing with me He cracked my fingers. Then He talked. Yes, He talked to me.' (830)

Here is an irrefutable record of a remarkable affirmation of a momentous nature. All the more remarkable that this should come as a passage between propositions and predications about God. In other words, unlike most religious records, the *Gospel* enacts what it propositions and predicates. Everywhere we find a reassuring intimation of the experiential origins of faith. But, then, does Ramakrishna privilege this dimension and negate the other (though secondary) forms of belief (and faith)? Obviously he does not. He would allow a plurality of statements to be made about faith—water can be named in various ways—but on condition that they all end up in experience. *Upadesha* without *adesha* is, in this idiom, to get stuck with propositions and predications. *Adesha* is a continual return to God. That this is entirely valid and eminently experienceable, the *Gospel* triumphantly dramatizes.

### Conclusion: For the Devotee

Discussions such as this appear cerebral

(severely so, for the uncharitable). But, then, in themselves they are a chart of our responses to and love for the Master and his *Gospel*. To admire the unique language, the inimitable image and symbol of Ramakrishna is to be caught, for the *sadhaka*, in the knot of propositions ('I believe that Ramakrishna exists.') A step further is to predicate ('Ramakrishna is an avatara' and so on) But the crucial and the most significant step is to return to him continually to find referents for those statements. And this implies the final step: treasure his Presence as experiential reality, as revelatory of and refracted by the *lenses of love*. Which ever level one chooses, there should be a continuous passage to him as a unitive recurrent truth. If this recurrent faith does not balance the other two, one will get tired of propositions in the *Gospel* and complain there are repetitions; one will get annoyed at the seemingly endless pluralism. But anchored in love, the boat of sadhana will 'gaily respond' and gloriously glide towards the Great Master through the safe passage of love.

All of which leads me to feel ecstatic about the fact that M gloriously recorded the words and evoked the Presence. For, as Breton puts it, 'writing retracts those paths that sing to us (*chantment*) and thus enchant (*enchantment*) us.'

*Kathamrita* is thus both exquisite chanting and a source of endless enchantment! \*

### References

1. Stanislas Breton, 'Being, God and the Poetics of Relation' in *States of Mind: Dialogues with Contemporary Thinkers on the European Mind*, ed. Richard Kearney (Manchester University Press, 1995), 255.
2. M, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), 106.

Sri Ramakrishna's love for us was so great that the love of parents and relatives seemed trivial.

—Swami Shivananda

---

---

# Religion in the Dynamic World

DR TAPATI CHAKRAVARTTY

The term 'religion' has been derived from two Latin origins, *re* which means 'back' and *ligure* which means 'bind', that is, 'to bind again'. Thus the term 'religion' suggests that the two objects of unification were originally unified and have only been temporarily separated.

## Religion Implies Unification

Religion, therefore, is the principle of unification and harmonization. It implies union of man (human soul) with the Divine (God). Different thinkers define religion in different ways: Taylor defines it as 'a belief in a spiritual being'; Kant says it is the 'recognition of all our duties as divine commandments'; and according to Galloway, it is 'man's faith in a power beyond himself whereby he seeks to satisfy his emotional needs and gains stability in life and which he expresses in acts of worship or service'.

We live in an age of science and we cannot accept incredible dogmas. It is an age of humanism, and service to humanity should be the central purpose of religion, because religion and service go together. Again, religions which are insensitive to human ills and social crimes do not appeal to modern man. Religions which make for division, discord and disintegration and do not foster unity, coherence and understanding play into the hands of opponents of religion.

## Religion Not Opposed to Science

The general impression that the spirit of science is opposed to that of religion is untrue. Instead of being opposed to each other, religion and science are mutually complementary. One of the main arguments for the religious thesis is the objective consideration of

the cosmos. What is called natural theology is based on the study of empirically observable facts and not on authoritative sources such as revelation or tradition.

Swami Vivekananda says,

Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of [external] nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science, because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book—the book without.

Religion and science are two necessary aspects of knowledge. Therefore there is a close relationship between the two. Albert Einstein says in his book *Religion and Science*, 'The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind.' Religion in one sense is a means of satisfying the hunger of the soul for attaining a state that is free from the strife and strain of mundane existence. So there is no reason for quarrel if people of different traditions make their own efforts for satisfying their hunger in their own different ways. Again, there is a close relationship between philosophy and religion as both represent two aspects of the same thing: philosophy interprets the ultimate Truth, and religion declares it to be the highest aim of life and tries to realize it in life by moral uplift.

## Religion and Values

Religion binds the individual to his ends and values. Values are the objects of desire which change continuously with human evo-

lution. The goals, the desired objects, vary according to each man's perspective. Thus the primitive, totemistic and animistic religions had material values, and their gods were the gods of nature. Their cravings were associated with biological needs. Man had no higher values, no insight and no humanistic ideal in his most primitive condition.

### **The Same God Inspires All**

But man and the universe are modes and manifestations of the Divine. The Divine in man and nature is ever trying to manifest and reveal Its being, and is the cause of all human and social aspiration and evolution.

God is the centre of all religions and all of us are moving towards Him. So, when each and every religion is evolving God out of the material man, the same God is the inspirer of each one of us. That points out to one certainty: the same Truth reigns in the heart of everyone. The fundamentals of all religions are one at heart. The one Reality is described differently according to religious inclinations. In other words, the Reality is spelt differently: Buddhists call it nirvana, Shaivas call it Shiva, Vaishnavas call it Vishnu, Shaktas call it Shakti. So, the Reality is one but its manifestations are many. All religions refer to the same Reality and they are all just like different pathways leading to the same goal.

### **Need for Tolerance of and Respect for All Religions**

Nevertheless, it is a hard fact that religion

has always been one of the most striking causes for struggle among the different peoples of the world. This has only generated more harm than good. Fighting in the name of religion has been our history, and even now there are many national and international problems that are religious in character.

What is now needed is tolerance and sympathy on the part of the followers of every religion towards other religions. We will have only to learn to respect all religions and accept their differences, natural as they are.

And the fact is, one cannot be intolerant and religious at the same time. One of the primary needs today is toleration and accommodation of others' ideas and sentiments. And if someone finds himself unable to do it, he has no right to claim himself to be religious.

### **Let Oneness Prevail**

So let the feeling of oneness prevail, transcending all distinctions. Let the words of Swami Vivekananda inspire us all: 'Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose that path that suits him best.'<sup>2</sup> \*

### **References**

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 6.81.
2. *ibid.*, 6.416.

---

When one door of happiness closes  
another opens.  
But often we look so long and so regretfully  
upon the closed door.  
That we do not see the new door  
which has been opened for us!

—Helen Keller

## Varanasi at the Crossroads

Swami Medhasananda. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park  
Kolkata 700 029. 2002. xxxvi + 1043 pp. Rs 500.

It may be said with quiet self-confidence: All about Varanasi is in this book. What is not indicated about the holy city in this book does not exist. So mesmerizingly thorough has been the twenty years of *tapasya* undertaken by Swami Medhasananda to give a complete picture of the legendary, historical, political, social, religious and literary history of Varanasi that by the time we reach the concluding pages, we have certainly achieved a *puja-pradakshina* of the holy place, where even the seemingly unconscious earth reflects God: *Kashi ke kankar, sab Shivashankar*. Even the pebbles of Banaras can be equated with Shiva Himself.

Also called Avimukta, Anandavana, Rudravasa, Jitwari and Mahasmashana, Kashi was known as Mohammedabad for a while, thanks to the iconoclast Aurangzeb. Its legendary past apart, Varanasi flourished under Hinduism and Buddhism because 'assimilation rather than annihilation has been one of the chief traits of Aryan civilization in India since its very inception.' Unfortunately, the Arabs and others who marched under the banner of Islam believed only in destruction. For five hundred years Kashi was caught in their murderous grip. Though Nialtagin left after sacking the city in 1035 AD, and later Malik Afzal Alvi could not overcome the Hindu resistance, Prithviraj Chauhan's defeat gave Qutubuddin Aibak a chance to loot the city and occupy it. He began with the score of destroying 1000 Hindu temples. Then came Firuz Shah Tughlaq, the Sharqi kings of Jaunpur, Sikandar Lodi and Shahjahan. Aurangzeb's atrocities, of course, defy recordation. He decimated the holy and magnificent tem-

ples of Vishwanatha, Bindumadhava and Krittivasa and built mosques on the sites.

Despite such wholesale destruction of religious centres where ritual worship had been maintained by the devout for centuries, Hinduism survived mainly because of the Bhakti Movement led in this area by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Kabir, Ramananda and Vallabhacharya. By inditing the *Ramcharitmanas*, Tulsidas managed to build a temple to Rama in the heart of the devotees. At the political level, the rise of the Mahrattas gave a breather to the Hindus and their temples. After the liberal rule of Mir Rustam Ali (1730-38), Mansaram, the governor appointed by the Nawab of Oudh, founded the Hindu line of rulers for Varanasi. But the rulers had to be subservient to the Muslim nawab and later on to the British rulers. The royal line blazed into publicity when Warren Hastings was impeached in England for his shameful behaviour towards Raja Chet Singh. On their part, the rajahs tried to do their best for the city and Raja Ishwari-narain Singh (1835-89), who brought out the best in talented people in the fields of arts, literature and education, is remembered to this day as 'the leading proponent of Varanasi culture'.

Swami Medhasananda begins his study with the topography of the city. The city as we see it now has been divided in various ways for several centuries. With nearly 1000 mohallas (residential areas) in the traditional lists of which the author has tracked about 400, we come face to face with a mind-boggling variety. Religious association as well as profession usually gives the name for the mohalla. The city seems to have always been a

centre of business: 'The extensive presence of mohallas with such names as hatta, chowk, ganj, katra, bazar, mandi (59 approximately), shows that the city abounded with shops and market-places catering to all sorts of needs of both the local people and visitors.'

There is not a page in *Varanasi* that does not assume the role of a teacher of social studies for the reader. Oh, we have never had a proper census of the city despite many attempts being made; the 1801 Zulfikar Ali Khan Census reports 7000 brahmins living on alms; some trades were common both to the Hindus and Muslims like those of weavers, surgeons and courtesans; shawl menders (*rafugar*), snake catchers (*madari*) and gem polishers (*hakak*) were exclusively Muslim; the Muslim population had its own *chandala* caste; Hindu-Muslim conflicts were familiar occurrences during the British rule since the rulers were not Muslims any more. Despite 600 years of Muslim rule, the population figures still tilted in favour of the Hindus. 'Muslims became all the more concerned to secure their place in the city by any means possible, from the encouragement of higher birthrates to the purchase of lands and buildings in and around Muslim sectors and elsewhere.' (135)

Left to themselves, the Hindus and Muslims gradually learned to shed differences and have integral relationships in matters of business and even some festivals like the Holi and Diwali. Some Hindu temples employed Muslims as servants. Reformist hymnologists like Guru Nanak and Sant Kabir helped much in securing inter-religious camaraderie. There are also dark pages in *Varanasi* which describe the savage custom of *sati-daha*. Sometimes the perverse tradition has jabberwockish results as when the court of Nizamut Adalat and Varanasi pundits refused to allow Chunderkallah to commit sati as she had only been a mistress of Kashinath, a police officer who has been killed in the Gorakhpur massacre. Reading the written matter and statistical tables presented by Swami Medhasananda, one real-

izes how much light has been poured into Indian society during the last 200 years and yet the woes of the Roop Kunwar case have not ended.

The very name Varanasi is a metaphor for religions, especially those belonging to the Vedic stream. Pilgrims have been taking different pathways to complete their pilgrimage in and around Varanasi. The Antargrihayatra pinpoints the circumambulation of Omkareshwara, Vishwanatha and Kedareshwara quarters; the Panchakroshiyatra calls for a complete circumambulation of the entire city; the Panchatirthayatra confines one to the five sacred ghats (Asi, Dashashwamedha, Manikarnika, Panchaganga and Varana Sangama) over the Ganges. Shaivism leads with the Vishwanatha temple containing one of the 12 Jyotirlingas. The idol was thrown into the nearby well and the temple destroyed in one of the Islamic attacks and the temple was re-structured by Ahalya Bai Holkar at a cost of Rs 3 lakh in 1777 and the image re-consecrated at that time. Other places of worship where Shiva has been consecrated in Varanasi include Vriddhakaleshwara, Adi Mahadeva and Tribhandeshwara temples. The enumeration of temples to Shakti begins with Annapurna. There is also an abundance of temples where the forms of Vishnu have been installed. These include Jagannatha at Asi Ghat, and Rama in Panchaganga Ghat.

The entire section on religion is fascinating no end. The importance of the guru and his sandals, legends of some of the wandering sadhus, the ascetic Prakashananda Brahmachari who lived on a bed of spikes, Trilinga (Telugu) Swami who was supposed to have entered mahasamadhi in his 281st year in 1887, Bhairavi Brahmani and Totapuri, who taught Ramakrishna Paramahansa certain yogic pathways, the Panda phenomenon, the Christian missions and the building of churches, the violent opposition of Mohammedans to Christianity ... Swami Medhasananda rightly concludes: '... the city's long and



chequered history as a religious centre; its catholic attitude towards different faiths; and, finally, its having become a meeting ground of nearly all the major religions of the world, has since provided Varanasi with a rare vantage-point and opportunity from which it is possible to make a comparative study of these religions and to promote the prospect of religious harmony.' (258)

This is indeed the triumph of our Sanātana Dharma. Varanasi perhaps celebrates a festival or fair every day and its many ghats are ever active. With a considerable floating population, Varanasi's economy has always been affluent as a centre of trade. Quoting from Dundiraja's *Girvanavangmanjari*, Swami Medhasananda reveals the strong purchasing power of coins in the 17th and 18th centuries. Surely it all sounds like riding the magic carpet when we learn about buying two and a half seers of pure ghee for half a rupee, and for less than two rupees one could buy for dinner white sugar, dal, asafoetida, cumin seeds, haldi, betel nuts, cardamoms, cloves, nutmegs, mace, saffron, musk and camphor. Apparently there were instances of buyers who finalized the purchases after taking a promise from the trader that there had been no adulteration (*pratijnayam grihitva*), a sort of ISI mark! Varanasi never suffered a famine, but the people were troubled by excessive taxation during the British period. It was a price they had to pay for the improved law and order situation in the city.

'Towards a Modern Municipality' brings us another array of information about the *phatakbandi* system unique to Varanasi and the role played by local residents in keeping the city in a reasonably good condition till the British came over and took up public works in a planned and phased manner. The health of the Varanasi citizenry takes the author on another historical adventure beginning with Dhanwantari and how Shushruta is said to have resided here and written his medical treatise (*samhita*) on Ayurveda. The Moham-

medans brought their Unani system, and allopathy was introduced by the British government in the 18th century. Apart from charitable dispensaries, there is also a blind asylum, a lunatic asylum and a leper asylum being run by the government during the last 200 years showing how 'Varanasi occupied a pioneering position among other Indian cities in providing both general and special medical services to common people along modern lines.'

Literature and academic institutions have always flourished in Varanasi. In modern times, Christian missionaries opened several educational institutions more for purposes of proselytization. However, their aim was not fulfilled and there were not too many conversions. On the other hand, the people welcomed with open arms the English education offered by the institutions, leading to a new efflorescence in their social and political lives. Naturally, printing entered the cultural life of the people and journalism became very popular. The first newspaper of the city was *Benares Akhbar*, begun in 1844. Hindi prose was gently eased out of heavy Urdu influence and gradually standardized as Khadiboli. Journals in Hindi, Bengali, Urdu and English were brought to being with enthusiasm, though many were short-lived.

The diaspora of Varanasi is indicated by the chapters on Europeans and Banarasi culture—home to so many facets of a man's personality! Music, for instance. The Buddhist legends speak of a king of Kashi, Brahmadatta, who was an excellent musician. Buddhist literature also speaks to us of Varanasi courtesans like Shyama, Sulasa and Athakashi, who excelled in music. With the coming of Mohammedans, there was a lot of intermingling and Hindustani music emerged strong with its base firmly in Varanasi. The *banarsi thumri* which sends out waves of joy, the *dadra* folk songs by the *tawaifs* of the city, *tappa* music of Mian Gammu and Shadey Khan at the durbar of Maharaja Uditnarin of Varanasi,

and the *banaras baaj* style of tabla playing are but a few of the many specialities of the city's music world studied by Swami Medhasananda. He observes that this was one area which was almost totally free of communalism.

Yet, the swami notes that communalism is not so easily hushed in the Indian clime and recollects the tragedy of Ramsahay who learnt tabla from Modu Khan of Lucknow. Modu Khan was criticized by his people for teaching his gharana to a heretic. Unable to stand up to the criticism in the name of universality of art, Modu Khan demanded, Drona-like, from Ramsahay his *gurudakshina*: 'Promise me that you will never teach anyone else whatever you have learnt from me.' Ramsahay agreed and never played or taught the style of Modu Khan. Instead, he devised his own style which is now famous as the *banaras baaj*.

Banarasi culture includes jester societies, Ramlila and Krishnalila festivities, painting (mughal school, Company school), architecture, sculpture, handicrafts (brasswork, weaving, jewellery), delicacies (*athbaja, matichur, mung dal laddu, rabdi, elaichidana*) and a lot more. Varanasi is *mauj* and *masti*! In the words of Pandit Shivkumar Shastri, 'Mauj epitomizes all that goes by the generic terms: enjoyment, conviviality, festivity, jollity, gaiety, and other similar ideas, while masti envisages contentment, serenity, placidity, tranquillity, exhilaration, geniality, buoyancy, self-esteem, heartiness, and even recklessness and wayward obstinacy.' (718-9)

Swami Medhasananda adds one more term, *anasakti*, a detached outlook: 'Thus, while sipping honey from the flower of the jovial and ever-festive city, it was not unusual for Banarasis to withdraw from their gay environs and become other-worldly. In fact, this other-wordliness is so strong, so palpable, so

nearly tangible in the ethos of the city, that it may have been almost impossible for Banarasis to remain insensitive to this underlying spirit of the place, and consequently, get lost in worldly enjoyment.' (719)

This conclusion marks the sanctum of this temple built by the swami with maternal care wading through a mass of books, photographs, notes and manuscripts. While the passage reveals how everything in Indian culture is ultimately tuned to the spiritual, the rest of *Varanasi* is a maze of *upa-sannidhis*. With the help of a choice sheaf of photographs to gaze at, you can tarry here and there to learn about the notable personalities of the place, the way law and order has been maintained in the city down the centuries, about the Varanasi-based movements (how Saiyid Ahmad came to Varanasi and tried to incite in vain the local Muslims through the Wahabi Movement to establish a Dar-ul-Islam in the city), how travellers have watched the people and the area closely (Captain Nikolaos Kephelas, Doryu Kitabatake, Enugula Veeraswamy and Fanny Parker among others, though I miss the celebrated Tamil poet Subramania Bharati in this section) and rest for a while musing on 'the city eternal'. This section which concludes the volume begins with 'Before we close ...' But we can never say *tamam-shud* to this wonderful volume. *Varanasi at the Crossroads* is a book to be treasured, an ornament and a guardian to one's home, a teacher on the foundations of Indian culture to whom we should return now and then to gain the subdued pleasure of exclaiming: 'I am lucky to be born in India, which has Varanasi!' \*

Dr Prema Nandakumar  
Researcher and Literary Critic  
Srirangam

Religion is its own end. That religion which is only a means to worldly well-being is not religion.

—Swami Vivekananda, *CW*, 4.279



## Reviews



*For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA  
publishers need to send two copies of their latest publications.*

**Lives of Indian Images.** *Richard H Davis.*  
Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow  
Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110 007.  
1999. viii + 331 pp. Rs 295.

Richard H Davis, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Yale University, needs to be complimented for a close and thorough study of certain Indian icons and images. The study was undertaken to explore the different worlds of belief these images have come to inhabit over a period of time. It also delineates the conflicts over the identities of these images.

The author particularly wants 'to exhume and examine past lives of images' such as the Didarganj Yakshi, first located by Maulavi Quazzi Sayyid Muhammad Azimul in October 1917. He traces the history of this icon through an improvised temple on the bank of the Ganges in a small hamlet of Didarganj, Bihar, to the Patna Museum. In those days, when the British ruled India, officials did not encounter any strong opposition to removing the icon from its makeshift temple to the museum. While doing so, they succeeded in convincing the devotees that the icon they were worshipping was not a deity of the Hindu pantheon but a mere *yakshi*. In the decades that followed Independence, there was a growing awareness of Indian sculpture, thanks to the 'Festivals of India' organized in London, Washington, Paris and Moscow, and the museum pieces verily became travelling emissaries of ancient Indian art and culture.

Davis attempts to reflect the attitudes and responses of viewers of these icons at exhibitions and museums and also present the sentiments of devotees who view these icons in their religious settings. He knows that most Hindus believe that the images they install in temples or home shrines are not merely stone or metal, but are as living as the worshippers themselves. There are elaborate rituals described in the Agamas that infuse life into these images and lend them an existence of their own. This renders the icons amenable to history and biog-

phy.

The book follows the cultural approach of the noted anthropologist Igor Kopytoff and has also used the 'reader-response literary theory' of Stanley Fish. Although these theories pertain more to literary works, Davis applies them successfully to historical art finds and depicts community responses to these objects on different occasions and in different settings.

*Lives of Indian Images* consists of case studies, or biographies, of icons and temples. Each chapter in the book focuses on a particular religious object or site and traces its history over a period of time. The author has also explored significant moments or dramatic shifts in viewers' responses in relation to other art objects as well. He first takes up the icon of Shiva Vrishabha-vahana, exhibited at the Festival of India in Washington in 1985 and compares and contrasts the responses the idol elicited in India and America, highlighting the difference in presentation in these two places.

Chapter 2 deals with icons as trophies of war, focusing on wars fought in south India during the centuries after 1000 AD. These consist of Chola bronzes and some other stone sculptures. The mindset of the victors with regard to these trophies is described. The icons were not desecrated but re-installed at prominent places in the victors' capitals; this gives a new interpretation of their existence. Davis compares the attitudes of Muslim and Hindu victors to these iconic war trophies and shows how their different responses add to the biographical material of these icons. The chapter describes the conquests of Madurai and Vijayanagara and the concealment and flight of portable icons. Davis says that the movements of these icons during hostilities engendered stories of adventure, heroism, sacrifice and miracles that would enhance the status of the image and its protector. The author has sifted Sri Vaishnava hagiographical texts of the seventeenth century to trace the literary responses to the events of capture and relocation of the portable icon of Ranganatha.

The book has an interesting chapter on Pathur Nataraja. This tenth century image was found by a poor peasant named Ramamurthi at the dilapidated precincts of the Vishvanathaswami temple. He surreptitiously sold the image, which found its way to London through smugglers. A legal battle ensued between the Government of India and museum authorities in UK and Canada for possession of the icon, in which various issues about the juridical personality of the temple-god were sorted out. The Indian government won the case and the icon was brought back to India and restored to the now rebuilt Vishvanathaswami temple. Incidentally, Davis touches on the workings of the underworld that does the business of stealing and trafficking icons and images.

The last chapter narrates the story of the 1950 reconstruction of the Somnath temple. After a brief history of this ancient temple, Davis gives an account of the efforts of people like K M Munshi, Sardar Patel and Jam Saheb that went into its rebuilding. The restoration of the temple mirrors India's resilient spirit—it also makes it clear that political will and wisdom go a long way in re-establishing the lost glory of our nation.

*Lives of Indian Images* is a well-documented work with copious notes on each chapter, fifty quality black-and-white illustrations and a thorough index. The reader is sure to gain new insights into the study of Indian art and its criticism.

Dr N B Patil

Honorary Director, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr P V Kane  
Institute for PG Research and Studies  
Asiatic Society, Mumbai

### **Sixteen Facets of Self-Realization.**

Swami Srikantananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. 2000. viii + 85 pp. Rs 15.

Here is a new type of book by Swami Srikantananda of Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, depicting sixteen Yogas represented by the sixteen direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Each disciple embodied one particular approach to the Ultimate and that approach has been highlighted in this book.

According to the author, the sixteen facets mentioned in the book are like sixteen holy streams. If we place our boats in these holy rivers we shall certainly reach easily the ocean of *bhava*, that is, Sri Ramakrishna. The book is divided into sixteen

chapters, each denoting a specific yoga. The names given to these yogas are somewhat original: Vishada Yoga, Neti Neti Yoga, Adhyatma Yoga, and so on. At the beginning of each chapter the author succinctly introduces a yoga with the help of scriptures and justifies how the life of each of the direct disciples reflects that particular yoga. For instance, the author feels that Swami Vivekananda's life exemplifies Anubhava Yoga, Brahmananda's life exemplifies Vatsalya Yoga and Premananda's life exemplifies Bhakta-Bhagavan Yoga. Swami Saradananda's life has been called Sarada Seva Yoga as he served Holy Mother with devotion. Swami Trigunatitanandaji's life depicts Karma Kushala Yoga as he was a perfect karma yogi. The life of these disciples have been presented with commendable brevity. Reading this book, not only are we able to gaze at the blazing sun that Sri Ramakrishna was, but can also get profiles of the spiritual giants that Ramakrishna's disciples were. We also get an idea of their relationships with Sri Ramakrishna and of their contribution to the Ramakrishna Order.

This work of devotion makes a rewarding reading.

Dr Chetana Mandavia

Associate Professor of Plant Physiology  
Gujarat Agricultural University  
Ahmedabad

**Quest for Realization: J Krishnamurti, the Bhagavadgita and G I Gurdjieff. Tribhuvan Kapur.** New Dawn/Sterling Publishers, A59 Okhla Industrial Area, Phase 2, New Delhi 110 020. 1999. 125 pp. Rs 100.

Tribhuvan Kapur's book deals with the process of self-realization as seen from three different points of view—that of J Krishnamurti, the *Bhagavadgita* and Gurdjieff. The book begins with a preface, which neatly sums up its argument. It is followed by five chapters and a useful index.

J Krishnamurti preached and taught 'instant nirvana', the validity of which the author disputes 'because Krishnamurti, no doubt in good faith, demanded a leap of consciousness which was quite impossible for most people to comprehend, let alone execute successfully'. (26) Krishnamurti, rightly or wrongly, considered the human race to be one of self-enlightened beings who could

'awaken in an instant to lifelong happiness and bliss' through 'a single moment of truly understanding the truth'. The *Bhagavadgita* emphasizes that the basic principle that guides action is dharma or duty. To Krishna, the only sin was the sin of inaction, which could lead to the complete dissolution of society. An interesting aspect of this analysis is that the author traces the antecedents of the *Gita* to the forest teachings of the Vedic Upanishads. Both emphasize that the individual should transcend the temporal and merge with the Eternal through meditation and a state of mental equilibrium. G I Gurdjieff's quest for self-realization begins by highlighting the incomplete paths of the 'fakir', 'monk' or 'yogi'. He advocated a fourth way, which was to control and master the body, emotions and mind simultaneously through a series of spiritual exercises within the orbit of one's daily life. In turn, this would lead to an integrated, holistic self.

Tribhuvan Kapur's efforts at providing a concise and coherent account of the philosophy embedded in the teachings of Krishnamurti, the *Bhagavadgita* and Gurdjieff are to be commended. By providing a critical analysis, he views them from the point of view of a sociologist, which, in fact, he is. By advocating the interrelationship between religion, self-knowledge and culture, the book endorses that spiritual understanding must come from within the milieu that one belongs to. Indeed, this book is a relevant and practical guide to self-realization.

Dr Rama Nair

Department of English  
Osmania University, Hyderabad

**Education in Human Values.** Madhu Kapani. Sterling Publishers, New Delhi. 2000. 158 pp. Rs 80.

Dr Madhu Kapani, on the faculty of the Satya Sai Institute of Education, has come out with an important and timely book on values vis-a-vis the problem of inculcating them. Obviously, the author has many years of experience in this area and does not pontificate on or streamline the complex question of values. The book consists of eight chapters and provides a comprehensive view of this problem ever since the National Educational Policy of 1986 was formulated. In another notable chapter she also studies the earlier efforts in this important area.

The present book has an interesting chapter on 'Sri Satya Sai Baba's Concept of Education', especially his views on integral education. The author rightly points out that 'Sri Satya Sai Baba, like Sri Aurobindo, has been stressing repeatedly that educational institutions are the appropriate agencies ... through which values can be inculcated and internalised.' Following his exhortations, the author identifies the basic values as knowledge, skill, balance, equipoise, love or intuition and universal compassion, which traditionally are identified as *jnana*, *karma*, *dhyana*, *bhakti* and *loka-sangraha*. They are basic human faculties which form the basis of any system of education.

The highlight of the book is the chapter on 'Approaches to Education in Values'. By means of diagrams and pictures the author illustrates many methods of educating students in human values. Broadly she suggests the direct approach, the indirect approach and the integrated approach through curricular and co-curricular activities. She rightly identifies something of great interest to the student—story-telling—as a fascinating way of evoking an awareness of values. She also envisages the use of situations in ordinary life as potential areas for teaching human values. She offers a very comprehensive model syllabus which includes topics and techniques for teaching basic values.

Though this is a revised version of the author's doctoral work, there is very little that is abstract in the book. This adds to its undeniable value. It also carries two appreciative Forewords, one by the present Vice Chancellor of Satya Sai Institute, Prof G Venkatesam, and the other by a former Vice Chancellor, Prof S N Saraf. The book is commendable for the contribution it makes to this topical area of value education.

Dr Sumita Roy

Associate Professor of English  
Osmania University, Hyderabad

**Jivanmukti (Liberation—Here and Now).** Swami Shantananda Puri. Parvatham C P Subbaraju Setty Charitable Trust, 13/8 Pampa Mahakavi Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore 560 004. 2002. 62 pp. Price not mentioned.

A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?' sings the irresistible Robert Browning. The poet is underlining the supreme



need for holding aloft the highest ideal in any field of human endeavour. 'Reach' stands for the goal set up and 'grasp' indicates the maximum that can be achieved. It may not be humanly possible to attain the ideal a hundred per cent, but on that score the ideal should not be lowered. It is the belief that there is a heaven in which perfect happiness can be had that makes the aspirant strive his best. The higher the concept of heaven, the greater the aspirant's effort to attain it.

It is against this background that we must examine the ideal of *jivanmukti*, liberation even in the embodied state. Most religions maintain that unconditioned beatitude is not possible when we are in the human body. Only after shuffling off the mortal coil can total freedom be had. *Videhamukti* is possible, not *jivanmukti*. Advaita, however, declares that *jivanmukti* is not a chimera. No doubt it is attained only by a very few, but its attainability is not questionable. Acharya Shankara vouches for it from his own personal experience. A number of Advaitic texts also deal at length with the fact of *jivanmukti*. So even if most of us many not be fortunate enough to realize *jivanmukti*, it is highly worthwhile to understand the nature of *jivanmukti* and the means to be pursued to progress in that direction.

Here Swami Shantananda Puri's book comes in handy. A disciple of the legendary Swami Purushottamanandaji Maharaj of Vasishtha Guha, the swami presents in very clear and pointed language the essentials of *jivanmukti*, citing authority from many texts like Dattatreya's *Jivanmukta Gita*, Sri Shankaracharya's *Sarva Vedanta Sara Sangraha*, Vidyananda's *Jivanmukti Viveka*, *Laghu Yoga Vasishtha*, *Ashtavakra Samhita*, *Ribhu Gita*, *Shukashatakam*, and a galaxy of Upanishads such as *Brihadaranyaka*, *Jabala*, *Mundaka*, *Maha*, *Akshi*, *Adhyatma* and *Annarpurna* as well as from the *Vivekachudamani*.

It must be remembered that the sadhanas, or spiritual practices, adopted for realization appear as *lakshanas*, or characteristics, in the realized individual. So if we study the personal traits of the *jivanmukta* we can have clear guidance regarding the path we have to tread.

It is our false identification with our body-mind complex that converts samsara, worldly life, into a misery-go-round. The *jivanmukta* is totally free from *dehatma-bhavana* (body consciousness). He never thinks 'I am the doer', 'I am the enjoyer.' Abiding in Brahman, the supreme Consciousness,

he has no preferences, no desires. He feels the same in all situations. He is like a dry leaf that is wafted by the wind and deposited now here, now there. He does not think of the past, nor does he contemplate the future. He lives intensely in the Now. His is choiceless awareness. Never idle, he considers all his selfless activities only as an instrument in His hands. *Kamini* and *kanchana* do not trap him. All worldly happenings do not affect him even as water does not wet the lotus leaf. The *jivanmukta* is like the space inside a pot. Space is indivisible. It matters not therefore to the space if the pot remains or is broken. Within and without have no meaning for it.

Swami Shantananda Puri's little volume is a delight to go through and inspires the reader to aim for the highest.

There is however one aspect of the *jivanmukta's* life that the swami could have discussed. Does *prarabdha* have any impact on the *jivanmukta*? The usual answer given in the authoritative scriptures is that while *sanchita* and *agami* can be avoided, *prarabdha* has to be endured. *Prarabdha* is like an arrow shot at a target, say a cow. Since the arrow has left the bow it cannot be cancelled, it must hit the cow. Unlike *prarabdha*, the *sanchita* and *agami* are arrows not yet released and so have no impact. Of course, the suffering by the *jivanmukta* is only in the eyes of the world, the *jivanmukta* himself does not attach much value to it.

When this question was put to Reverend Swami Jagadanandaji Maharaj, to whom we owe the English translation of *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, he had a revealing answer. Himself a *jivanmukta*, he could reply without any hesitation that *prarabdha* need not have any impact on the *jivanmukta*. His one reason was, 'Suppose the cow has moved away from the spot, how can it be hit?' The other reason he gave was this, 'A man incurs a lot of debt and the court decrees the attachment of his property. But he files an insolvency petition. Legally he has now no property of his own. So how can the court decree be executed? Sri Ramana Maharshi, ever delighting in divine Bliss, gave a more humorous answer. 'A man has three wives. He dies. Can it be that two of his wives have become widows and the third remains a *sumangali*?'

In brief, *jivanmukti* is a consummation devoutly to be wished for and striven for.

C S Ramakrishnan  
Former Editor, *Vedanta Kesari*, Chennai

---

## ❧ Reports ❧

**Inaugurated.** The newly renovated part of Srimat Swami Premanandaji Maharaj's ancestral house at Ramakrishna Math, Antpur, where Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi had stayed in 1889 and 1894; by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 1 September.

**Won.** The National and Arunachal Pradesh Teachers Awards; by a teacher of the higher secondary school run by Ramakrishna Mission, Along; on 5 September (Teachers' Day).

**Inaugurated.** A new dining hall at Matri-mandir, Jayrambati; by Swami Gahananandaji; on 9 September.

**Visited.** Vivekananda Ashrama, Ulsoor; by Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; on 9 September.

**Inaugurated.** The newly built dispensary building at Ramakrishna Math, Ichchapur; by Swami Gahananandaji; on 12 September.

**Participated.** An inter-religious conference on 'Dialogue for Peace: The Contribution of Religions to Living Together', organized by Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey; by Swami Smarananandaji, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 12 September.

**Opened.** The biomedical waste management complex at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow; by Sri Vishnukant Shastri, Governor of Uttar Pradesh; on 20 September. The Governor also released a commemorative volume brought out on the occasion.

**Laid.** Foundation-stone for the proposed Gita Darshanam building (an audio-visual museum delineating some of the themes of the *Gita* and the Upanishads) at Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad; by Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission; on 22 September.

**Visited.** Ramakrishna Math, Mangalore; by Sri T N Chaturvedi, Governor of Karnataka; on 23 September.

**Laid.** Foundation-stone for the proposed dispensary building at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Contai; by Swami Gahananandaji; on 25 September.

**Launched.** [www.yogodyan.org](http://www.yogodyan.org), website of Ramakrishna Math (Yogodyan), Kankurgachhi; in September.

**Renamed.** Ramakrishna Ashrama and Ramakrishna Mission Seva Samiti, Sylhet, Bangladesh; as 'Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Sylhet'.

**Treated.** 3120 patients at medical camps in flood-affected areas of Darbhanga and Samastipur districts, Bihar; by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna; in September. The centre had earlier distributed food to flood victims in various parts of the state.

**Distributed.** Rations, utensils, garments, blankets, cots and fishing-nets, among other things, to 43 families affected by a ravaging fire at Gurjapulanka village in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh; by Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada; in August.